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Sketches for Sermons

Chiefly on the Gospels

FOR THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS
OF THE YEAR

BY

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NEW YORK

JOSEPH F. WAGNER

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Author's Preface.

HAD the writing of these "Sketches," or Suggestions, for Sermons for the Sundays and Holy Days of the year depended upon the Author's own initiative, or upon his belief that he could "fill a want long felt," they would surely never have appeared in print. It was in response to a special request that the task was undertaken; and it may be truly affirmed that neither the desire to oblige nor any prospect of personal advantage resulting from the work would have been a sufficient inducement to accede to the request, had the writer not indulged the hope that he might be able to render a real service to his busy Brother Priests, at least to those just entering the field of their missionary labors and assuming the great responsibility of "Preaching the Word."

The reader will not need to be told that no attempt whatever has been made to introduce striking novelties, or to exploit the results of recent critical and historical Biblical research. While professing a high appreciation of the value of many of these results, and disavowing all sympathy with the indiscriminate condemnation of those who have labored in this field, the writer ventures the opinion that the time has not yet come when the cause of Religion and Morality can be served by injecting learned and, for the masses of the people, bewildering discussions into the simple moral teaching that has borne such good fruit since the days of our Lord and His Apostles.

It is the duty of the Priest of to-day to make himself as thoroughly acquainted as possible with what is doing, and has been done, along the new lines referred to—in order that he may use the knowledge thus acquired, in dealing rather with that class of persons who have little or no Faith, and upon whom nothing else can make so strong and salutary an impression as the discovery that the exponent and champion of Religion is prepared to meet them on their own ground.

But the audiences usually addressed from the Catholic pulpit are almost entirely composed of persons who wish, and need to be told plainly of their duty to God: to be reminded of the various ways in which they are liable to fail in

the discharge of it; and of the means that God has placed at their disposal to enable them to do His Will, and save their souls.

Such indeed is the summary of our Blessed Saviour's teaching; and He spoke as "never did man speak," either before His time or since.

The sole and constant effort of the writer has, therefore, been to keep our Blessed Lord in the foreground, as the DIVINE TEACHER; and to offer such suggestions as would aid the young Preacher in imparting to his sermons and instructions something of the simplicity and directness of our Lord's own discourses.

The numerous Scriptural texts should contribute not a little to the attainment of this end, especially as the careful noting of chapter and verse will facilitate reference to the context; and the passages cited, volume and page, in various modern writers will furnish, without loss of time, many useful and reliable details.

While studiously avoiding all recourse to formal sermons, or synopses, or works of any kind intended as aids in sermon-making, the writer has been scrupulously careful to indicate the sources from which he has drawn, being anxious that the reader should refer to them for fuller information. An intimate acquaintance with the authors most frequently referred to—à Lapide and Maldonatus; Kenrick, Manning, Fouard, Gaume, etc.—can not fail to be of inestimable value to the young Priest in learning to present the doctrines of the Church with accuracy, and in the true spirit of our Lord and His Apostles—to preach "Jesus Christ and Him Crucified."

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION, 1903.

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SKETCHES FOR SERMONS.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

RENEWAL OF TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

“Denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, justly, and godly in this world.”—Titus ii. 12.

Exordium.—By virtue of a custom that goes back far beyond our earliest recollections, to-day is a day of joyful greetings and cordial good wishes. And it is right and proper that it should be so. It should, in fact, be a day of heartfelt thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving for the blessings received during the past year; thanksgiving for dangers averted; for difficulties overcome; for consolations in sorrow, trials, and misfortune. Thanksgiving for the blessing of life and health still vouchsafed to us.

It is, whether we are fully conscious of it or not, the sense of this manifold goodness of God that fills our hearts with joy and makes us give expression to it in our oft-repeated New Year's greetings.

But besides this all-pervading sentiment of joy, there comes to us, too, a sense of *duty* and *responsibility*. For the dawn of the new year is a reminder of the passing of time.

I. The passing of time—flowing on like a mighty river—carrying us along even in spite of ourselves. We can not row against its current. We know not at what moment we are to pass over the falls and into the abyss of eternity.

Time is passing. Our day is drawing surely to its close. "The night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4). The moment is drawing nearer and nearer when "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. xiv. 10).

II. Hence reflection upon our present state with relation to God, the author and preserver of our life.

Resolution and effort to renew in ourselves the true Christian life. This is what Holy Mother Church urges us to do to-day, reminding us that "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men. Instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world."

Ungodliness: All lack of reverence for God, for His Holy Name, neglect of His precepts, direct and wilful violation of them. Forgetfulness of His blessings, of His claims upon us, and of our utter dependence upon Him.

Worldly desires: Inordinate seeking after what the world offers to its votaries: riches, honors, luxury, gratification of sensual appetites, ambition, jealousy, rivalry, enmity, selfishness, etc.

These are the things to be avoided or corrected. On the other hand, true Christian life is to live "soberly," i. e., not merely temperately as regards use of drink, but keeping the passions and evil impulses and inclinations under restraint. "Justly," i. e., in faithful discharge of duty toward God and toward our fellow men in all the relations of life.

"*Godly*," i. e., in an abiding sense of the presence of God, of His overruling Providence, and His claim upon our reverence, obedience, and love.

All this is beautifully explained by St. Paul: "Put off, according to former conversation, the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

And put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth," et seq. (Ephes. iv. 22-32).

Conclusion.—Two means of accomplishing this suggested in today's Epistle: 1. "The grace of God our Saviour," which "hath appeared to all men." 2. Divine hope, with the reward attached to it. "Looking for the blessed hope and the coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Exhortation.—To begin the new year by a renewal of the true Christian life, heeding the admonition of Holy Mother Church and the words of the great Apostle—in order that his prayer for the Philippians may be fulfilled in you: "And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7).

OCTAVE OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

INFANT SAINTS.

"These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb, for they are without spot before the throne of God."—Apoc. xiv. 4, 5.

Exordium.—In St. Matt. ii. 16, we read of the cruel order issued by Herod to kill all the male children "in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under." We also read, v. 18, of the wail of inconsolable grief that swept over the land in consequence of the execution of the inhuman edict: "A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not."

Herod's object, it is well known, was to compass the death of the new-born "King of the Jews." His utter failure is one of the many proofs that "There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord" (Prov. xxi. 30).

But why a good and loving God should have permitted such an atrocity, why He should still so frequently permit the tenderest of all human ties—those between the mother and her infant—to be broken asunder, is one of His dispensations that many fail to understand.

Our Holy Mother Church strikes the key-note of the answer, in choosing the words just quoted, of the Apocalypse, for the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

I. The death of infants is no argument against the goodness of God.

1. Death is no greater evil at one period of our existence than at another, in infancy or in youth, in the prime of life, or in old age.

2. Death, i. e., separation of soul from body, is not an evil at all—except in case the soul is not prepared for it.

3. That separation means simply the extinction or suspension of the life of the body until the day of resurrection, when “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I. Cor. xv. 53).

4. Our Divine Saviour tells us that even when this separation of soul and body is effected by violence, it is not an evil: “And I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do” (Luke xii. 4).

II. The death of infants is a proof of God’s special love for them. What is the unanimous craving of human beings? *To be well off*. Where is a person better off—on earth or in heaven? “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?” (Mark. viii. 36).

How is good fortune estimated in this world? Some persons are born to all that wealth and social position can give. Others by one means or another, succeed sooner or later in rising to high position in a very short time. While the vast majority, by life-long labor, succeed at best in gaining only an honest living—and that embittered frequently enough with sickness, sorrow, and suffering. Now which of all these classes does the world consider the most happy or the most enviable? Evidently those who possess from their childhood all that they can desire—provided, of course, they make good use of it. Is not the same true of children—infants who are taken into that house in which “there are many mansions”? (John xiv. 2).

It is of faith that the soul, by baptism, is made “A child of God and heir to the kingdom of heaven”—capable of seeing God face to face.

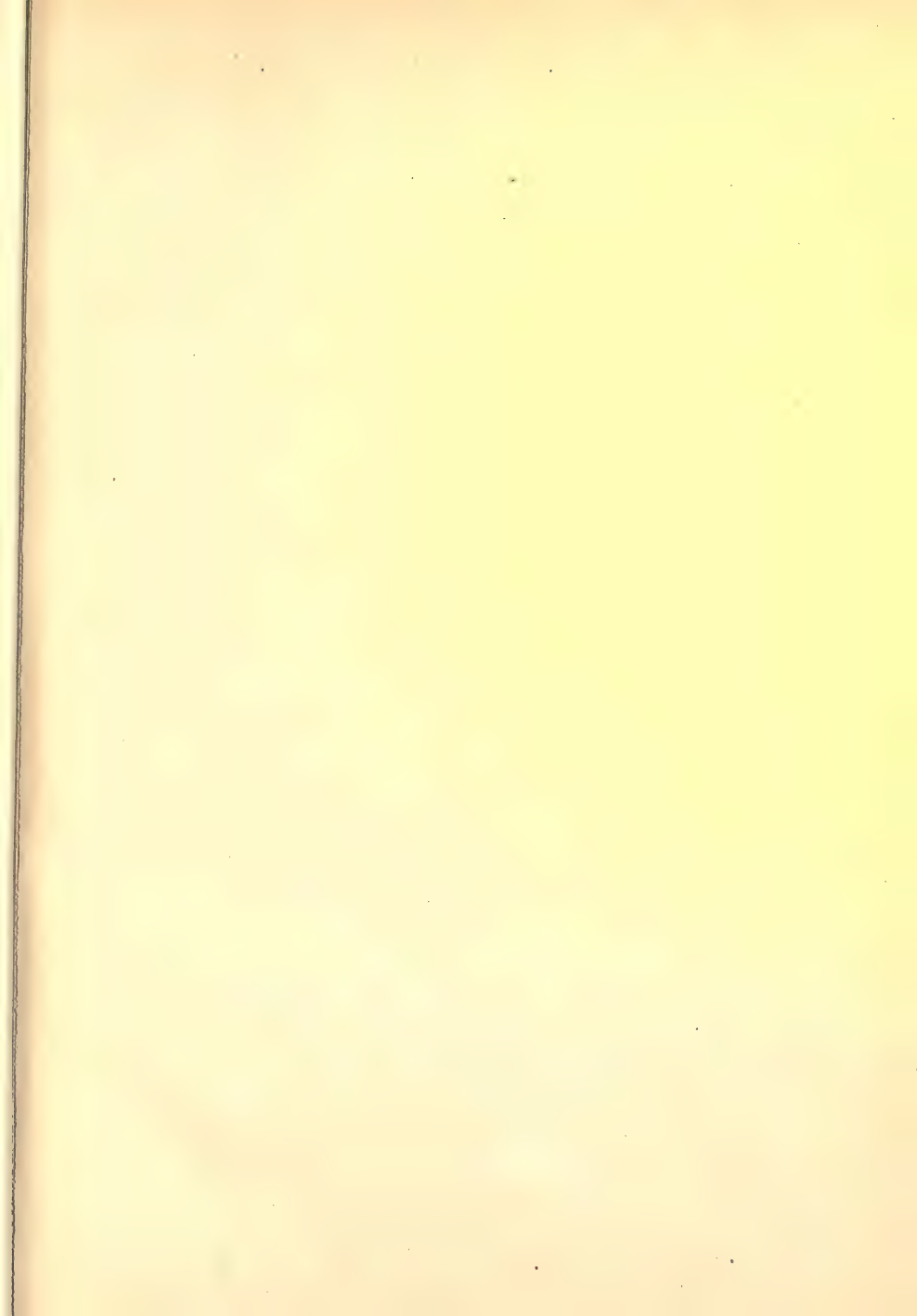
It is the will of God that a greater number of souls reach heaven

by going through the trials, temptations, and sufferings of this life. But what if He exempts some from this ordeal? "Venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years. A spotless life is old age. His soul pleased God: therefore he hastened to bring him out of iniquities" (Wis. iv. 8, 9, 14).

What more pleasing to God than the spotless soul just regenerated in the waters of baptism?

Conclusion.—With much reason, therefore, does Holy Mother Church make a joyful commemoration of her Holy Innocents—her *Infant Saints*—her "first fruits to God and to the Lamb." With much reason does she say of them, "These were purchased," etc.

Joy and consolation for parents whose children have been taken to heaven, in youth or in infancy. Let them bless God, and treasure up in their hearts the loving words of our Divine Saviour: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark x. 14).





OCTAVE OF THE EPIPHANY.

FIDELITY IN CORRESPONDING TO GRACE.

"We have seen his star in the East and are come to adore him."—Matt. ii. 2.

Exordium.—Essential difference between the mystery of the Nativity and that of the Epiphany.

In the former our Saviour appears in the midst of His own people, by whom He should be recognized as the long-expected, oft-promised Messiah.

He is announced by angels, but adored by only a handful of the chosen people of God, who had been specially instructed and prepared for His coming.

In to-day's mystery, on the contrary, He manifests Himself to those who were not of the household of Israel—to strangers from afar—thus intending to show that He is truly the Saviour of the world—*of all mankind*.

The Gospel narrative is one of extraordinary beauty, and suggestive of several instructive and practical lessons. The one selected for to-day is: "Fidelity in Corresponding to Grace."

I. The Magi were models of fidelity in corresponding to the first call of grace, which brought them to the knowledge of the true faith.

They were far away from Bethlehem. In a heathen country. With very few opportunities of coming to a knowledge of the true God—much less of the Messiah. They were doubtless, upright, honest, sincere, faithful to the natural moral law. Anxious to know God better, and to serve Him.

Hence the light came to them in their darkness, "To enlighten them, and to direct their feet into the way of peace" (Luke i. 79).

Promptness to follow the Star. Leaving all things behind—save alone the gifts which they were to lay at the feet of our Blessed Saviour.

Earnestness and Fearlessness: Pursue their long journey without faltering. Enter fearlessly into the strange, walled city of Jerusalem—even into the very palace of the mighty Herod—not to pay homage and tribute to him, but to ask the unwelcome and dangerous question, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore him."

Their fidelity brings them safe to the crib. They come not empty-handed, but with gifts of symbolical meaning: Gold—charity, love of God. Incense—prayer. Myrrh—mortification, self-abnegation, restraint of the passions. [For various symbolical meanings, cf. à Lapidè in Matt. II.]

II. The Magi models of Perseverance in true Christian Life. After offering their adoration and their gifts they are in no hurry to rush away. They linger near Our Lord. The peace of God inundates their souls. They sink into blessed, restful slumber, under the guardianship of angels. Before awaking they receive the Divine warning not to return to Herod.

Herod and his profligate court represented the wickedness and the dangers of the world. To have returned thither would have been to go the way of the relapsing sinner—the unfaithful neophyte. It would have been to betray Our Lord, and probably—almost surely—to lose their own lives.

But they did not. "They returned by another way into their own country," i. e., by the way of a higher and better life—thus corresponding to the new graces they had received.

Conclusion.—Encouragement to those who are far away from Bethlehem, in the land of darkness and doubt, of error, and of sin.

Exhortation to those of the household of the true faith, to be earnest in trying to imitate the example of the Magi, and zealous in praying that all those who are still afar off, may see and follow the Star of Truth till it leads them to Bethlehem, there to acknowledge that the new-born babe is truly Jesus Christ, Son of God, *Saviour of the world.*



SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME.

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

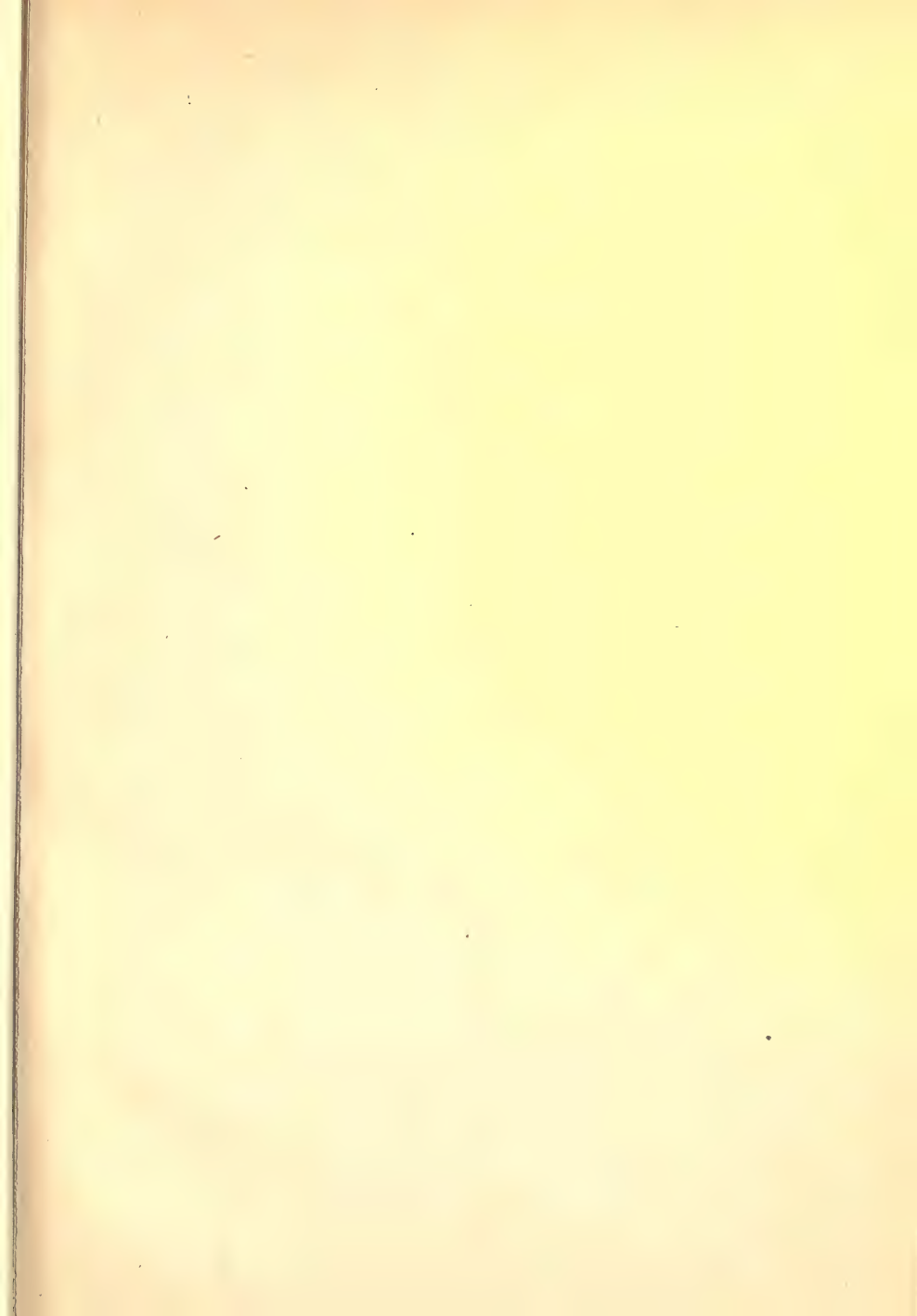
“God hath also exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names.”—Phil. ii. 9.

Exordium.—Most fitting that Holy Mother Church should honor by a special feast the holy name of her Divine Founder. That she should remind her children of its heavenly origin, its sublime dignity, its divine power. That she should remind them of what they owe it, and the confidence they should have in it. That she should remind them of the respect and reverence they should have for it.

I. *Its heavenly origin:* Chosen in heaven by the most Blessed Trinity, and announced on earth by an archangel (Luke i. 31; ii. 21). *Its sublime dignity:* A name which is above all names. “How admirable is thy name throughout the whole world!” (Ps. viii.). “Holy and terrible is his name” (Ps. cx.). “From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise” (Ps. cxii.). *Its divine power.* The cure of the lame man at the “Beautiful gate” (Acts iii. 2-7). St. Peter’s declaration (Acts iv. 8-12).

By this same power the apostles wrought signs and miracles, and converted the world. By the same power Christ’s ministers accomplish their mission to-day.

II. What we owe to the Holy Name: Everything. Our redemption. Our regeneration in baptism. All the graces received from the Eternal Father. “If you ask the Father anything in my



name, he will give it to you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you shall receive " (John xvi. 23, 24).

In a word, we owe to it our eternal salvation. " Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved " (Acts iv. 12).

III. Respect and Reverence due to the Holy Name. Reasons and motives without number, v. g.

1. We respect and venerate the names of parents and friends, heroes, statesmen and public benefactors. We resent promptly and indignantly any mark of disrespect shown to them, and this for many reasons that readily occur to the mind.

Are there not more and stronger reasons for vindicating on all occasions the honor and respect due to the Holy Name?

2. God Himself demands respect and reverence for it. He gave it. " That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth " (Phil. ii. 10).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to love and gratitude, on account of all the blessings received through it. To confidence in its divine power. Have recourse to it in sorrow, pain, danger, temptations. Sanctify all actions by the Holy Name. " All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ " (Col. iii. 17).

Lastly, zeal in defense of the honor of the Holy Name. Hope that the Holy Name may be our protection and consolation in the hour of death and our password to eternal life.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

MUTUAL FORBEARANCE.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens; and so you will fulfil the law of Christ.”—Gal. vi. 2.

Exordium.—In these words the apostle clearly and explicitly exhorts us to practise the virtue of Mutual Forbearance, i. e., to bear with one another’s faults and defects.

This exhortation seems to be quite in harmony with those given in the Epistle just read (Rom. xii. 15-21). “Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep. Be not wise in your own conceits. To no man rendering evil for evil.”

Many reasons why we should bear with one another’s faults:

I. All have not received the same gifts from God—either natural or supernatural. Grace is His own free gift, and He gives it *when* and *as* He pleases.

So in His all-wise Providence He permits the conditions of individuals to differ widely: Some are exposed to greater temptations than others. Some from childhood up are placed in more favorable circumstances than others—good homes, good parents, good moral associations; advantages of education, occupation, etc.

Again some, by nature, are of a much happier temperament than others: Some have certain good qualities, while others have the opposite defects, and *vice versa*.

All these things are known in their true proportion and just relation, to God alone, the “Searcher of the reins and the heart” (Ps. vii. 10), and He alone is the Judge of each one’s merit or

demerit. Hence St. Paul says to us, "Judge not before the time" (I. Cor. iv. 5); and St. James asks, "Who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?" (James iv. 13). While our Blessed Lord tenderly says: "Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven" (Luke vi. 37).

Such is the warning given, not to take offense at our neighbor's faults nor to enter into judgment with him.

II. Our neighbor's faults will appear less offensive if we give him due credit for his good qualities and good actions, and make a generous allowance for his defects.

Candid appeal to conscience will often force us to admit that, on certain occasions, our neighbor was more generous, more kind, more good-natured, or more charitable than we would have been in the same circumstances.

Let each one, before passing judgment upon his neighbor's fault, or upon his neighbor's downfall, ask himself, "What would I have done in the same circumstances, or under the same influences?"

III. We should ask ourselves how much our neighbor has to bear with from us. Are we perfect? St. Paul did not think so. "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. vi. 3).

Even if we have any good qualities, they are the free gift of God. "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?" (I. Cor. iv. 7). We may have the same faults that we condemn in our neighbor. "Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. For thou dost the same things which thou judgest" (Rom. ii. 1).

Conclusion.—I. God gives different gifts, and disposes the dif-

ferent circumstances of our lives according to His own divine wisdom.

2. He reserves to Himself the judgment of our actions.

3. We all have our own faults.

Therefore be charitable and generous with one another. "Forgive and you shall be forgiven. Give and it shall be given to you: good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall they give into your bosom" (Luke vi. 37, 38).

Then will friendship, and mutual esteem, charity, and brotherly love prevail—according to the words of the great apostle: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."



FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

JESUS STILLING THE TEMPEST.

"What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?"—
Matt. viii. 27.

Exordium.—Commentators are agreed that our Lord's primary object in working this miracle was, to give an undeniable proof of His divine power.

Symbolically it is also supposed to show His watchful care over His Church.

These are the two points to be considered to-day.

[For other symbolical meanings, see Cornelius à Lapide, Matt. viii. 23-25.]

I. A sublime manifestation of Christ's divine power. The circumstances connected with the miracle indicate that He intended it as such.

He had recently given many proofs of it: Healing the paralytic at Capharnaum (Mark ii. 1-12). Cleansing the leper. Healing the centurion's servant and Peter's wife's mother. Casting out spirits with His word from the many that were possessed with devils, and healing all that were sick (Matt. viii. 2-16). Restoring to life the widow's only son (Luke vii. 11-17).

These miracles had indeed spread His fame abroad, and had caused many to follow Him. But they had also fanned into a flame the hatred of the Scribes and Pharisees, some of whom had come down from Jerusalem (Mark iii. 22), and who uttered the unpardonable blasphemy (Luke xii. 10) of accusing Him of casting out devils

by Beelzebub, the prince of devils (Matt. xii. 24). [See Didon, Vol. I., 380.]

After refuting their calumny and rebuking their obduracy, Jesus instructs the people in a series of beautiful parables: The Sower, The Cockle, The Mustard Seed, etc. (Matt. xiii., Mark iv.). Then, to escape from the multitude, and obtain a much-needed rest, He enters a boat with His disciples, ordering them to pass over to the other side: "and there were other ships with him" (Mark iv. 35, 36).

The storm bursts upon them. The waves are lashed into irresistible fury. All seems hopeless'y lost. Jesus Himself seems unconscious of the danger. He sleeps. Is awakened by the despairing cries of those around Him. Rises in quiet, undisturbed majesty. With an authority more impressive and astounding than He had hitherto shown. He rebukes the winds, and says to the sea, "Peace be still!" Instantly they obey. Absolute power over the wild, untamed, irrational elements.

The desired effect is produced. The men wondered, saying: "What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?"

David had answered the question more than one thousand years before: "O Lord God of Hosts, who is like unto thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea. When the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them" (Ps. lxxxviii. 9, 10).

[See Trench, *On Miracles*, p. 113; Didon, *Jesus Christ*, Vol. I., 385; Edersheim, *Life of Christ*, Vol. I., 603.]

II. Christ's watchful care over His church.

All Catholic commentators and spiritual writers find this symbolic meaning in this miracle.

The bark of Peter is the Church. [Didon I., 387.]

Peter was at the helm, but powerless, of himself, to weather the storm. Utter destruction imminent and apparently inevitable.

Jesus invisible to all save those in Peter's boat.

Even to them He seems to be asleep.

But he answered promptly to the despairing cry: "Lord, save us; we perish." He rebukes the winds and commands the sea, and instantly there is a great calm.

Such has been the history of "The Bark of Peter," through all ages. Such it will be *all days, even to the consummation of the world*, for Jesus has promised to be always with it (Matt. xxviii. 20).

Many are the storms which it has encountered: Heresies, persecutions, false accusations, disobedience, wickedness, ingratitude of her own children, corruption even in high places. But still it rides fearlessly upon the bosom of the deep, in storm as well as in calm.

Conclusion.—Profound reverence for the *divine power* of Jesus. Unbounded confidence in it. Gratitude for His watchful care over His Church, and for His having called us to be members of it. All honor and glory and praise to Him who "commands the winds and the sea, and they obey Him."

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.

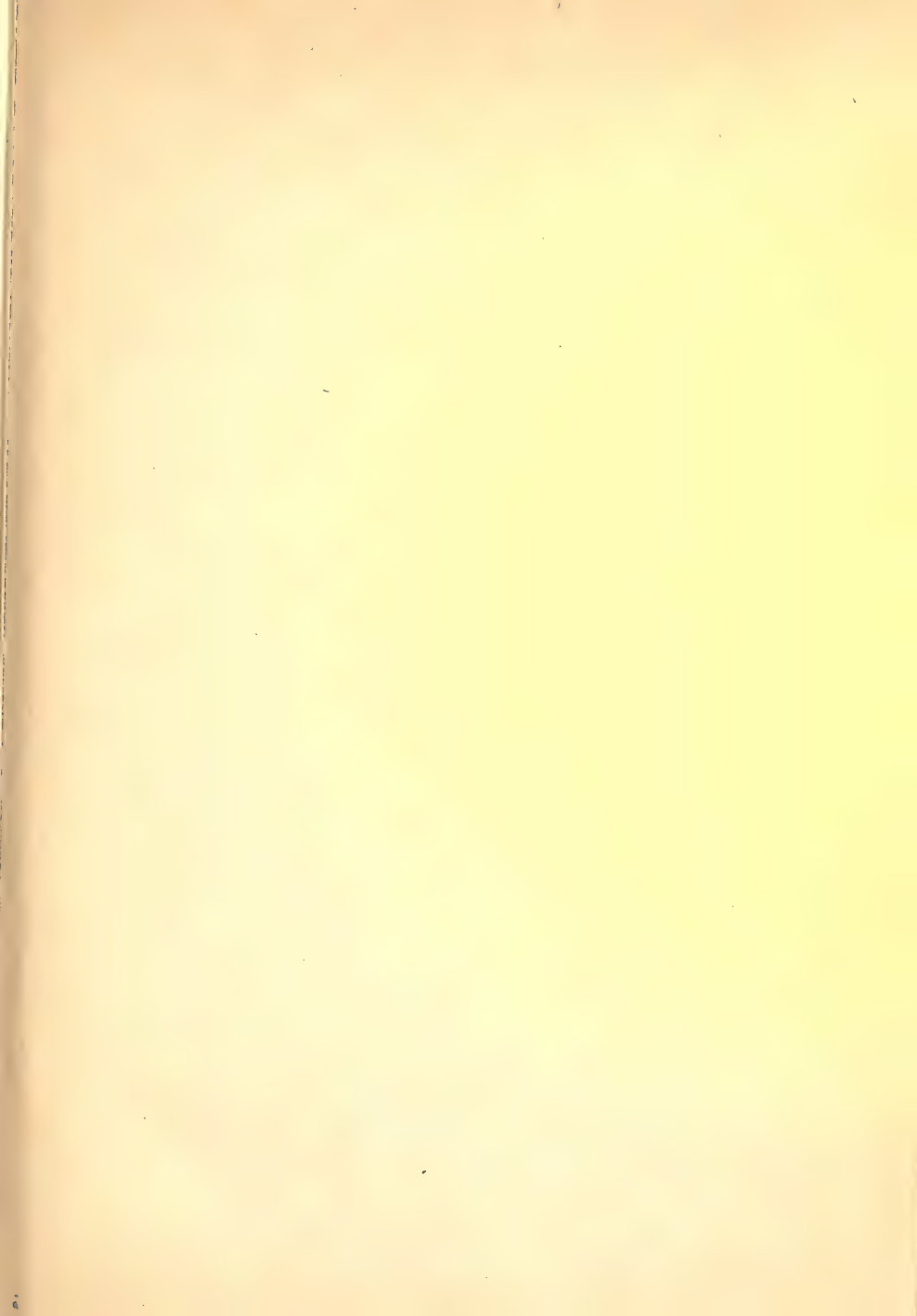
"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil because I am good?"—Matt. xx. 15.

Exordium.—Twofold meaning of the parable: Our Lord, when speaking, intended to make His hearers understand something which they had not at all understood or suspected before, viz.: that salvation was for all men—for the Gentiles, who were being called at the eleventh hour, as well as for the Jews, who had been called in Abraham.

The second meaning of the parable is, that God by His grace is constantly calling individual souls, at every hour of the day; and that it is never too late for any one to begin to work and to obtain a full day's wages, i. e., the salvation of his soul, or entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

In this secondary meaning, which more particularly concerns us, the parable teaches us three things:

1. The persistent goodness of God in calling men to eternal life.
 2. The encouragement offered to those who have not yet come to a knowledge of the true faith, and even to those who, knowing it, have fallen away or follow evil courses.
 3. The munificence, and at the same time the perfect justice of God in rewarding even a tardy correspondence to His grace.
- I. The persistent goodness of God in calling men to enter His vineyard, i. e., to do what will ensure their eternal happiness.



Impossible to conceive or estimate the extent of this goodness. May recall some of the many different classes of souls to whom it is shown:

Some born and reared and preserved in the true faith all the days of their lives—"thanks to him for his unspeakable gift" (II. Cor. ix. 15).

"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (II. Cor. x. 17).

Some born to this rich inheritance, but grow up in ignorance of it; sometimes through negligence of parents; sometimes in consequence of loss of parents, or of other misfortune.

Some in the bright days of their youth, knowing but thoughtlessly, leave their Father's house and go off like the prodigal son and waste their substance, living riotously until reduced to the necessity of *feeding upon the husks of swine*.

Others fall away later in life—many, indeed, never to return—but many also to be brought back by the persistent goodness of the Master of the Vineyard.

Finally, the multitudes born in ignorance of the true faith and raised in prejudice against it.

Who can be ignorant of God's goodness to them from the days of St. Paul down to our own?

For all these, in a thousand ways, is the grace of God working to bring them to the happiness for which they were created. Calling them early in the morning, and at the third, the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh hour.

II. Encouragement: I. To those who have not yet come to the knowledge of the true faith.

Many of these when asked, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" may answer, with much sincerity, "Because no man hath hired us."

Nevertheless the Master of the Vineyard goes out at every hour

of the day to hire them. Uses an infinite variety of ways and means to induce them to enter His vineyard.

Sometimes speaking gently, as to the Samaritan woman, "If thou didst but know the gift of God" (John iv. 10).

Sometimes utterly subduing them, as in the case of the over-zealous but erring Saul (Acts ix. 1-6).

At other times expressing His desire to gather them all unto Himself: "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold" (John x. 16).

At all times, speaking to them through His ministers, to whom He hath given commandment to "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15), and whom He hath clothed with an authority coequal with His own: "He that heareth you, heareth me" (Luke x. 16).

Let no one, therefore, be deterred or discouraged by the lateness of the hour.

2. Even to those who, knowing the truth, have fallen away, or follow evil courses.

Encouragement found in this parable: The same wages paid to the last even as to the first.

In the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son.

In Our Lord's words: "I have come to call not the just, but sinners to repentance" (Mark ii. 17).

In His weeping over Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 37-39).

In His promise to the thief on the cross (Luke xxiii. 43).

III. The munificence and the justice of God in rewarding correspondence to grace.

Injustice of the murmurings against the Master of the Vineyard: All commentators agree that the recompense mentioned in the parable represents the kingdom of heaven, i. e., admission into the presence of God, to remain there forever.

This recompense is far greater than any one can deserve or claim as his due, even after the longest life perfectly spent.

If, then, God pays these more than their due, He surely has the right to do what He pleases in regard to the others. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil because I am good?"

Moreover, from the fact that a number of souls are admitted into heaven, it does not follow that the reward of merit is the same for all.

It is *in heaven*, not *on earth*, that God "will render to every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27).

In heaven all will be happy. No envy; no jealousy. Each one will feel that he has infinitely more than he has deserved, or could have imagined.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (I. Cor. ii. 9).

And yet there will be degrees of happiness, so apportioned by almighty God that each one will feel that every good action performed on earth has increased his capacity for happiness and enjoyment.

Conclusion.—Admiration of the infinite goodness, bounty, wisdom, and justice of God.

Prompt response to His call, no matter how late the hour.

Heed the warning with which the parable closes: "Many are called, but few are chosen."

Also the very special warning to those who are of the household of the faith.

"I say to you that many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into exterior darkness" (Matt. viii. 11, 12).

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

“The seed is the Word of God.”—Luke viii. 11.

Exordium.—This parable, as spoken and explained by our Lord, sets before us three important considerations:

1. The obligation of hearing the Word of God.
2. The obstacles to hearing it with profit.
3. The dispositions requisite in order that it may bring forth fruit in full measure.

I. The Word of God referred to in the parable is evidently the Spoken Word, i. e., the Word of God contained in the Scriptures and preached and explained by those divinely commissioned to do so.

Our Lord speaks of a sower as well as of the seed:

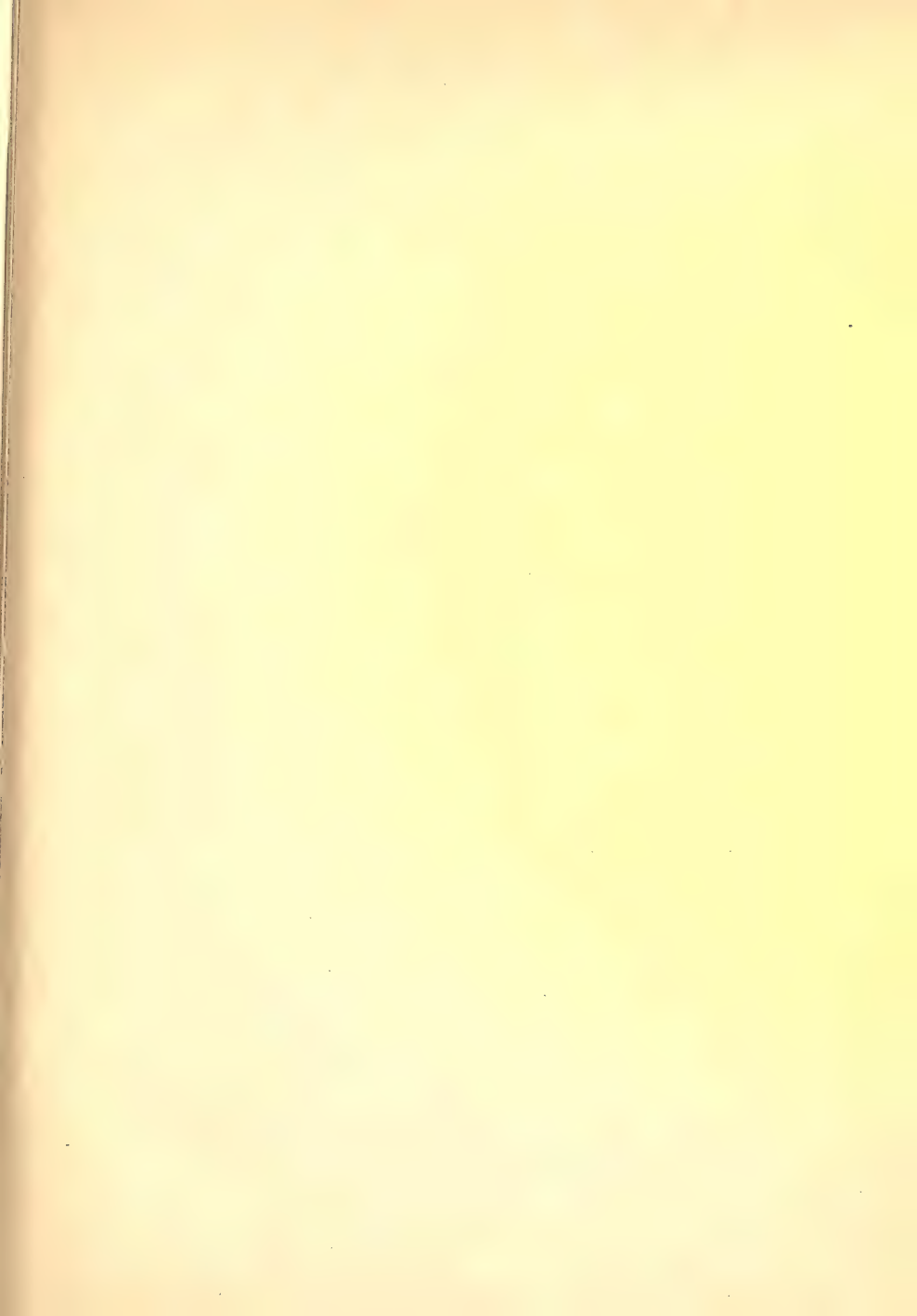
“He that soweth, soweth the word” (Mark iv. 14).

He strictly commanded His apostles to go forth and “preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark xvi. 15). “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. xxviii. 20).

St. Paul also speaks of the necessity of preaching the Word of God—*by those who are sent*:

“How shall they believe him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach *unless they be sent?*” (Rom. x. 14, 15).

The obligation of preaching clearly implies the obligation of hearing the Word of God. The obligation of learning the precepts of the Gospel—the truths of religion.



They are to be learned by hearing them from those competent to teach. "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. x. 17).

They must be learned in order to be observed: "Teaching them to observe all things."

"But all do not obey the Gospel" (Rom. x. 16). And yet all have heard. "For the voice of them that preach the Gospel of peace . . . hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world" (Rom. x. 15, 18).

II. Our Lord points out three obstacles: Frivolousness, Shallowness of conviction, Worldly ambition.

The first of these renders utterly hopeless the task of sowing the seed. Makes both mind and heart like the wayside—the hard, beaten thoroughfare.

Total lack of religious training. No habit of religious thought. No interest in the things of God or of the soul.

No intellectual or religious home life or associations.

No reading, save that which is worldly, sensational, godless—feeding the mind on the veriest husks of swine.

No conversation or mental occupation, except about the follies, fashions, amusements, or sensations and scandals of the hour.

The second obstacle the natural development of the first—shallowness of mind and weakness of will.

Weariness and satiety, or perhaps even remorse, may occasionally make the sound of the Word of God welcome; but it can take no root.

Depth of conviction and firmness of resolution impossible. Mere *hearers* of the Word, and not *doers*.

"Shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass," etc. (James i. 23).

Third obstacle—*worldly ambition*: quite different from the other two. There are persons weak in neither intelligence nor will. They

hear the Word, and might retain it, but they refuse to give their energy and their intellect to the things of God.

Devoted to the search after riches, honors, social distinctions. Engaged in greedy, selfish struggle for what the world can give. Care not for the harvest that might be reaped from the good seed. Christian morality and Christian perfection are antiquated, jejune—too great a restraint upon social liberty and refinement.

The Gospel maxims are opposed to their business principles. The practice of religion takes too much time. Its obligations inconvenient.

Confession means sorrow, amendment, restitution, honesty.

Communion means purity of conscience, consistent Christian life.

In the Word of God there are too many *hard sayings*.

There is one that need never be heard: "Depart from me."

III. Three requisites: Earnestness, Fidelity, Perseverance.

1. *Earnestness*: "A good and very good heart."

Not corrupted, seared, hardened by sin and vice.

A heart (in the sense of both intellect and will) that has a yearning for goodness, truth, and righteousness.

A heart filled with that charity of which St. Paul speaks. (I. Cor. xiii. 4-7).

2. *Fidelity*: "Hearing the Word, they keep it." Study it. Remember it. Are not ashamed of it. Put it in practice in daily life.

3. *Perseverance*: Bring forth fruit in patience.

True Christians—followers of Christ.

"Doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (James i. 22).

Willing to bear crosses, contradictions, sorrows, privations, sufferings. "Knowing that that which is at present light and momentary of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (II. Cor. iv. 17).

“ Looking for the blessed hope and the coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ” (Tit. ii. 13).

Conclusion.—Avoid the evils pointed out in the parable.

Make the home truly Christian. “ Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ ” (Phil. iii. 20).

Abhor the worldly, paganizing spirit, which begets utter ignorance and forgetfulness of God.

Forsake not God for mammon. Learn and obey the great commandment in the law: “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,” etc. (Matt. xxii. 36, 37).

Remember the consoling words of Our Lord:

“ Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it ” (Luke xi. 28).

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

CHARITY THE GREATEST OF ALL VIRTUES.

“And now remain these three, Faith, Hope, and Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity.”—I. Cor. xiii. 13.

Exordium.—Explanations in regard to virtues. Definition of virtue. A habit, or state of mind disposing a person to perform good acts.

Not a passing impulse, but a habit, which implies that *good acts* are frequently performed.

Virtue is, as the term implies, *strength*.

Natural virtues are the strength which man has acquired or developed, unaided by divine grace, to do certain good actions. Give examples.

These natural virtues may all become *supernatural*—above human strength—by the aid of the grace of God.

There are other virtues which are purely supernatural, being infused into the soul by Almighty God.

Chief among these are faith, hope, and charity, and these are called Theological Virtues, “because they have God for their object, and lead us directly to him” (Gaume ii. 585*).

I. The greatest of these is *Charity*.

Faith is a virtue by which we believe, on the authority of God, all the truths He has revealed.

It is a pure gift, enlightening the intellect, and merely eliciting its assent. Knowledge gratuitously given.

* Catechism of Perseverance.



“Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for; the evidence of things that appear not” (Heb. xi. 1).

It is a necessary gift, without which man can not reach God. “For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder to them that seek him” (Heb. xi. 6).

Faith, therefore, leads to hope, which is also “a gift of God, by which we expect with confidence all that he has promised us,” including eternal life—the possession of God Himself (Gaume ii. 300).

Faith enlightens the soul. Hope draws it on to the object of its desires.

Charity enables it to lay hold on that object, viz.: God. It is a gift of God by which we love Him above all things, *for Himself alone*. And our neighbor as ourselves, also for His sake.

“Thus the end of the commandment is charity” (I. Tim. i. 5; Matt. xxii. 37). “God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him” (I. John iv. 16).

Hence its excellence. But there is another evidence of this excellence:

Faith ends in heaven—is changed into vision.

“Now we see through a glass darkly: but then face to face” (I. Cor. xiii. 12).

Hope ends in heaven—where possession takes the place of expectation.

Charity is intensified in heaven, and *endureth forever*.

II. Excellence of charity, above all other gifts and virtues, in our relations with our fellow men:

Better than all knowledge. Better than faith that would remove mountains (I. Cor. xiii. 1, 2).

Better than the utmost generosity and self-sacrifice: “If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my

body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (Ibid. v. 3; Admirable qualities of charity, *ibid.* vs. 4-7).

Conclusion.—Thanks to our blessed Lord, for having revealed to us the "great commandment in the law" (Matt. xxii. 37-39.)

Thanks to God for implanting this greatest of all virtues in our hearts. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5).

Strive to practise it:

"Before all things, have a mutual charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins" (I. Peter iv. 8).

"Dearly beloved, let us love one another: for charity is of God. And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God" (I. John iv. 7).

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF OUR LORD.

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil."—Matt. iv. 1.

Exordium.—This incident in the life of our Blessed Lord took place just after His baptism by St. John in the river Jordan. So it appears from the narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. St. Mark, after relating the circumstances of the baptism (i. 9-11), says, "And immediately the *Spirit* drove him out into the desert" (i. 12).

St. Luke in the same connection says, "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan, and was led *by the Spirit* into the desert" (iv. 1).

Hence it must be distinctly understood that our Lord was led *by the Holy Spirit*—not *by the devil*.

Our Blessed Lord never *followed* the devil a single step; never *met* him without vanquishing him.

Why then did He allow Satan to tempt Him?

1. To teach us that *temptation* is *not* sin.
2. To teach us that temptation may assail us even at the moment when we think we should be freest from it.
3. Our Lord allowed Satan to propose three particular temptations because they include *all the temptations* to which we are exposed.

I. Temptation *is not* sin:

The strongest proof of this is the fact that our Lord submitted to be tempted. Absolute impiety to suppose that our Lord would sub-

mit to the slightest taint or shadow of anything offensive to His Eternal Father.

He was a great High Priest who could "have compassion on our infirmities," because He was "tempted in all things like as we are" but "without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

Tempted means simply *tried, tested*. The sin is in *yielding, consenting*.

When a man's honesty is *tested* by opportunities, inducements, hard pressure, and he refuses to yield, his character and reputation are esteemed far more highly than before. He has been tried as gold in the crucible. So God allows the soul to be tried by temptation, and it comes forth brighter, purer, stronger, after each trial. All the misfortunes, contradictions, and disappointments of life are *temptations*—which may indeed turn the weak, unwary soul away from God, but which draw the faithful one nearer to Him.

For "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (I. Cor. x. 13).

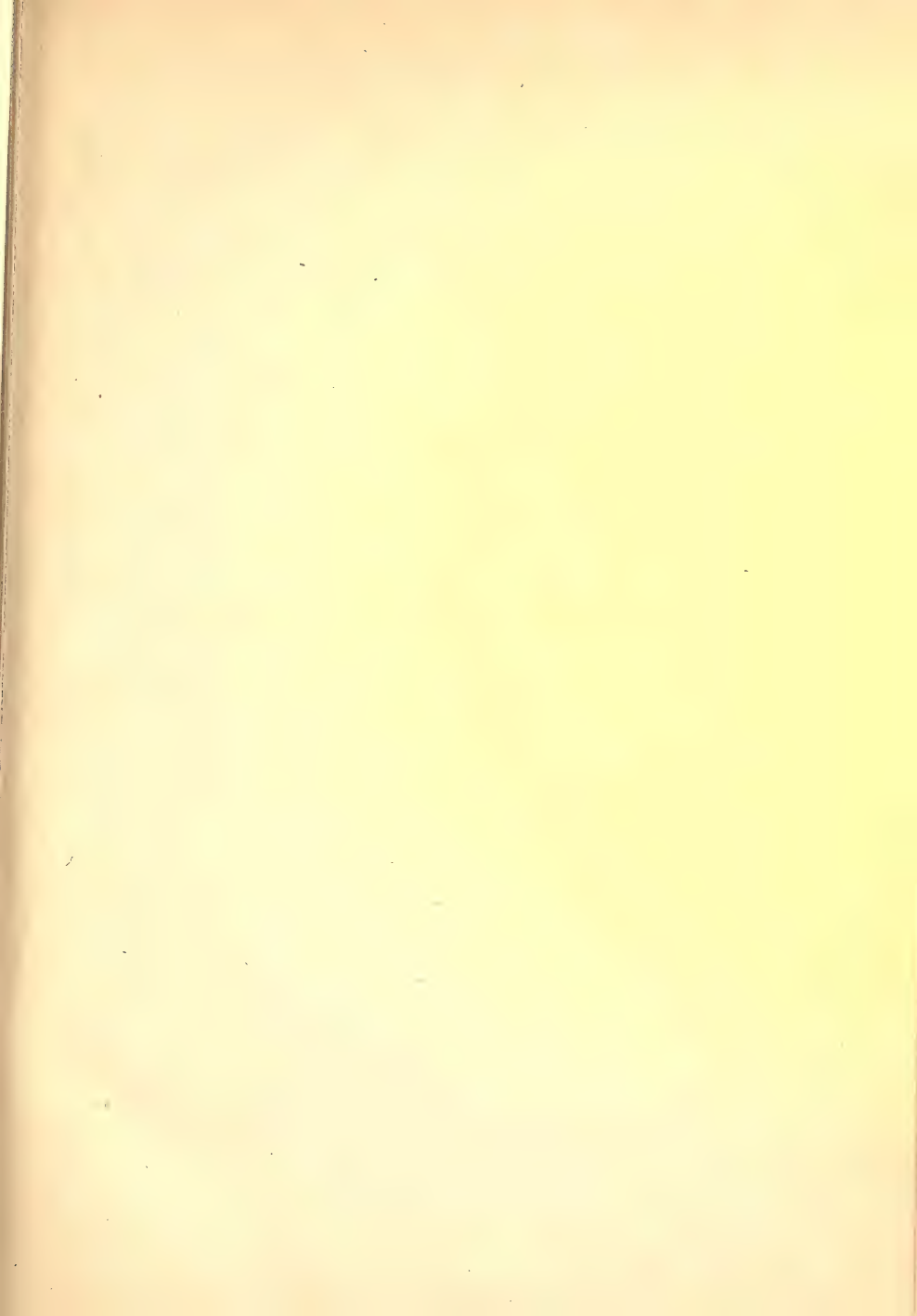
Example of St. Paul. His many trials (II. Cor. xi. 24-33).

Besides all these, "A sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet him" (II. Cor. xii. 7).

His prayer to be delivered from temptation; and the answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity" (II. Cor. xii. 9).

II. Temptations may come when we think we should be freest from them: In moments of prayer. Just after receiving the Sacraments. While we are in sentiments of fervor, and sincere love of God. Just after, or while performing, acts of charity, generosity, mortification, etc.

So it was with our Blessed Lord: Had just been baptized; was





full of the Holy Ghost. Had just finished His forty days and forty nights of fasting and prayer.

At that very time He allowed the devil to tempt Him. What greater proof needed that temptation is *not* sin?

III. The three temptations of our Lord include *all those* to which man is exposed.

(a.) "Command these stones to be made bread." i. e., "Gratify your appetite. Yield to your natural cravings and impulses. Take the shortest means possible—*any means*—to avoid suffering, or privation, or inconvenience."

These are some of the so-called *evils* that many have to bear. They are poor, unfortunate; have not all they need or desire; are tempted to murmur against God and His Providence; tempted to take unlawful means to rid themselves of these *evils*—to *better* their condition.

Our Lord's answer suggests the real and only remedy: Faith, and resignation to the will of God.

"Not in bread alone doth man live" (i. e., not by having earthly comforts), "but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

(b.) "Cast thyself down"—i. e., "Take your chances; you may escape. Sometimes persons do. God is good."

This is the temptation of the negligent, thoughtless, reckless. They give free rein to their passions; fall repeatedly into grievous sin; abandon the sacraments; still think they keep the Faith; say "God is good," and expect help and pardon (at the last moment—they do not care for it *before*), but do everything to deprive themselves of it.

Our Lord's answer is a solemn warning: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

(c.) "All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me." The bait with which too many are caught.

Over-eagerness for this world's goods; for its honors; its glittering show; for social position; *entrée* into fashionable circles; for this, they forget God and abandon Holy Mother Church; become ashamed of the Faith in which they were born, even of their good, simple, honest parents, who still practise it. They "fall down and adore" the world—the devil himself.

Again our Blessed Lord lays down the irrevocable law: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and *him only* shalt thou serve."

Conclusion.—Bear up under the trials, privations, and misfortunes of life.

Strive to live virtuously, and *tempt not God*.

Run not heedlessly into danger. "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (I. Cor. x. 12).

Be not seduced by the tempting offers of the world. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 37).

Lastly, be not worried or discouraged by temptations that come unsought. For "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (I. Cor. x. 13).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him" (James i. 12).

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."—Matt. xvii. 5.

Exordium.—The remarkable incident related in to-day's Gospel is doubtless interesting and pleasing to pious souls. They like to read about it, and to think of it. It is miraculous. Something extraordinary, wonderful; such as God can do whenever He pleases to do it. Our Lord did it, because He was God. Who would not envy the three favored disciples who saw it? Who would not feel as St. Peter did—wish to gaze upon it always? Who does not feel, perhaps regret, that the beautiful vision vanished so soon?

It may be that this is all that many see in the mystery of the Transfiguration. But this is *not all*—far from it. Though this event took place only a few months before our Lord's Passion, there is no other in all His preceding ministry so full of meaning—so instructive.

I. One object of our Lord was doubtless to encourage His three chosen disciples and strengthen their faith.

The fame of His preaching and His wonderful miracles had given rise to many conflicting opinions as to who He might be.

"Whom do men say that the son of man is?" He had asked of His disciples (Matt. xvi. 13), and they gave Him the popular rumors. "But whom do you say that I am?" He asked again, and "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 15-16).

The heaven-inspired answer is rewarded: "Thou art Peter, and

upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!" (Matt. xvi. 18).

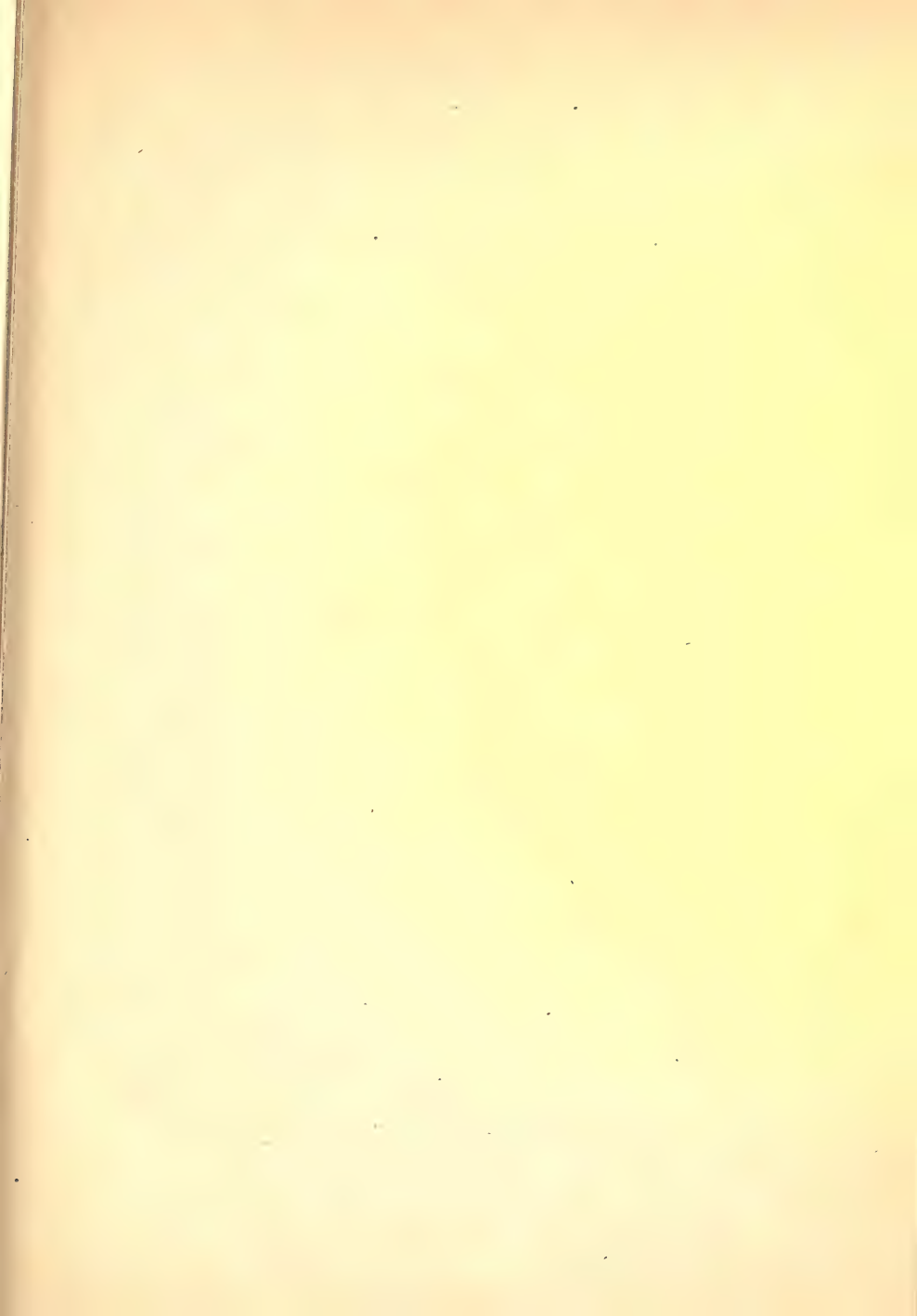
Immediately after this promise our Lord begins to speak of His humiliations and His Passion, and is obliged to rebuke Peter, who impulsively rejects the idea of his Master's submitting to such indignities: "Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal to me" (Matt. xvi. 21-23).

Jesus saw clearly, even now, what He afterward foretold: "All you shall be scandalized in me this night" (Matt. xxvi. 31). Wished therefore to strengthen the faith of at least the chosen three, by letting them see with their own eyes what was actually hidden under His meek and humble exterior.

II. The Transfiguration meant more than this. Its full import was to be understood only after the resurrection. "Tell the vision to no man, till the son of man be risen from the dead" (Matt. xvii. 9). It was to stand for all time as the verification of past events in the life of our Lord, and as the proof of His divinity (Cf. II. Peter i. 12-19).

Many times had testimony been given to His true character, but He knew the imperfectness of the understanding, and the weakness of the faith of His witnesses. Andrew had said to Peter, "We have found the Messiah" (John i. 41). Philip had said to the honest, but incredulous, Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write" (John i. 45). Nathanael in his turn bore testimony, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John i. 49). Peter's confession, the most glorious of all, had been commended by our Lord himself: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 17).

Even the demons had been constrained to bear testimony to Him:





"Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? I know thee who thou art, the Holy one of God" (Luke iv. 34).

Our Lord had frequently given testimony of Himself: "I came down from heaven" (John vi. 38). "From God I proceeded and came" (John viii. 42). "Before Abraham was made, I am" (John viii. 58). "I and my Father are one" (John x. 30).

He had also twice foretold His resurrection: "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19). "As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Matt xii. 40).

All these words are beautifully verified or recalled to mind in the Transfiguration: "His face"—the face of the meek and humble Jesus of Nazareth—"did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow." Moses and Elias, representing the law and the prophets, appear "talking with him," to show that He fulfilled the one, and was the verification of the other.

The Holy Ghost appears in visible shape, and the voice of God bears testimony: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

Descending the mount, He again foretells His resurrection: "Tell the vision to no man, till the son of man be risen from the dead."

Conclusion.—Gratitude to God for this wonderful summary of divine revelation. Admirable confirmation of the faith of the apostles, who were to convert the world. Profound love and veneration for our Lord Jesus Christ. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him."

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

COWARDICE IN SPEECH.

“At that time Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb.”—
Luke xi. 14.

Exordium.—Speech, one of the many admirable gifts that God has lavished upon man. To be deprived of it, either from birth or by subsequent accident, is regarded as one of the greatest misfortunes. It would seem from to-day's Gospel that the devil has power to rob man of the use of this priceless faculty. Certain it is that this arch-enemy of our souls, who “goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” is constantly striving to make us turn all of God's gifts against ourselves. He succeeds in many ways in regard to the gift of speech. One of these ways bears a striking resemblance to what has just been read in the Gospel: The devil makes men dumb—makes them keep silence when justice to their neighbor and the honor and glory of God require that they should speak.

I. Injustice to one's neighbor through cowardly silence: Damaging rumors, harsh criticisms, unworthy motives attributed. These are known to be false or improbable. Other facts are known that would contradict the opinions expressed. Silence—through fear, or ill-will, or culpable disregard of truth and justice.

Even a friend comes to state his views on a certain question in dispute. He is evidently in the wrong, but would willingly take advice. If he does not get it, he will do something injurious to himself or to others.

Silence, or an apparent approval—through want of courage and candor.

A request or proposal is made that is evidently wrong and unlawful. Conscience revolts, judgment condemns, but courage fails. Silence—and the wicked deed is accomplished.

Examples of weak compliance or servile fear:

Aaron consenting without protest to make the golden calf (Exod. xxxii.).

Herod giving the head of John the Baptist (Matt. xiv.).

The parents of the blind boy cured by our Lord (John ix. 19-22).

How common a fault; how widespread; how far-reaching in its evil consequences; how wickedly opposed to charity, and justice, and friendship.

II. Fear and shame, where truth, virtue, the honor and glory of God are at stake.

No protest against profane or obscene language. Nor against the irreverent use of the Holy Name. Nor against the blasphemous denial of the existence of God. Nor against the ridicule of the Bible and of all religion and revelation.

No word, through fear or ignorance, in defense of the true faith when it is ridiculed or calumniated.

Examples of this weakness and cowardice:

Many of the followers and hearers of our Lord said secretly, "He is a good man" (John vii. 12). "Yet no man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews" (John vii. 13).

Peter trembling before a servant girl. Pilate deterred from pronouncing a just sentence by the cry of the mob: "If thou release this man, thou art not Cesar's friend" (John xix. 12). Felix, the Roman governor, leaving Paul in chains—"being willing to shew the Jews a pleasure" (Acts xxiv. 27).

Opposite examples: The three youthful captives in Babylon, refusing to obey the powerful Nabuchodonosor (Dan. iii. 16--18), Daniel interpreting for Baltassar the writing on the wall (Dan. v.). Peter's testimony to the multitude in Jerusalem (Acts iii. 12; iv. 9). Stephen's testimony before the council, though he knew that death would be the penalty (Acts vii. 2).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to overcome this species of cowardice and deceit. Courage in this regard even more noble than courage on the battle field. No man ever showed this courage without commanding the respect and admiration of his fellow-men.

Truth, justice, love of God, and love of neighbor demand it. Our Lord Jesus Christ demands it as the condition of His friendship; "He that is not with me is against me" (Luke xi. 23).

"Every one, therefore, that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32, 33).





FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

"Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on."—Matt. vi. 25.

Exordium.—The miracle recounted in to-day's Gospel has a special importance, as prefiguring and preparing the way for the great mystery and continuous miracle of the most Blessed Sacrament. Principal details given in almost the same words by the four evangelists. St. John also gives at great length in the same chapter our Lord's discourse delivered on the following day to those who had seen the miracle, and to many others, on the bread of life.

But to-day we shall consider the lesson which the miracle teaches of *confidence in God*.

I. The confidence shown by the multitude:

Perhaps that confidence was only implicit—not the result of deliberate thought or intelligent conviction. It may even be that in their excitement or enthusiasm they simply forgot for the moment all about their bodily needs and comforts. Even so, what they actually did was exactly what sincere, earnest, reasonable Christians ought to do.

They had seen our Lord's miracles, and His kindness to the poor and afflicted; they had heard His words—and were drawn toward Him. They not only listened to Him eagerly and with responsive hearts when He chanced to come their way and when it put them to no inconvenience, but even when He quietly left them and went over the sea "into a desert place," they followed Him in great numbers. As many as could, went in boats; many more on foot by the

longer route around the sea-coast (Matt xiv. 13). Their sole desire was to hear His words, and to be freed from any evils or infirmities under which they were laboring—were not in search of pleasure.

II. Our Lord rewards their confidence, and at the same time manifests His divine power.

Received them kindly, “and had compassion on them, and healed their sick” (Matt. xiv. 14). “He spoke to them of the Kingdom of God” (Luke ix. 11). They listen again with eagerness and attention—no thought of fatigue or hunger—no thought of going away. The day is far spent. For the moment, at least, they were not “solicitous for their life, what they should eat.”

Our Lord, like His Heavenly Father, knew that they had need of all these things. He works the astounding miracle. Five thousand people to feed in a desert place. Only “five loaves and two fishes.”

“He looked up to heaven and blessed them: and broke and distributed to his disciples to set before the multitude, and they did eat and were filled. And there were taken up of the fragments that were left twelve basketfuls” (Luke ix. 16, 17).

Admirable manifestation of divine power! He had already cast out devils, restored sight to the blind, hearing and speech to the deaf and the dumb, health and strength to the sick, the fever-stricken, and the palsied; had restored the dead to life; had commanded the winds and the sea, and they had obeyed. Now He shows Himself the Lord and Master of the very laws of nature—of matter and space.

Merely showed who He really was. He “was the Word, and the *Word was God*. All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made” (John i. 1, 3).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to confidence in God.

“Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee” (Ps. liv. 23). Earnestness and energy in the duties and business of life, but “render to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. xxii. 21). Fear not to give a little time to the service of God—to the needs of the soul—to prayer, reflection, repentance. Fidelity to Sunday obligations. Begrudge not a few hours from business to attend Lenten devotions, the mission, etc. Hearken to the words of our Lord:

“Be not solicitous, saying, What shall we eat; or what shall we drink; or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things the heathen seek.

“Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. vi. 31-33).

PASSION SUNDAY.

CHRIST'S ARRAIGNMENT OF HIS ENEMIES.

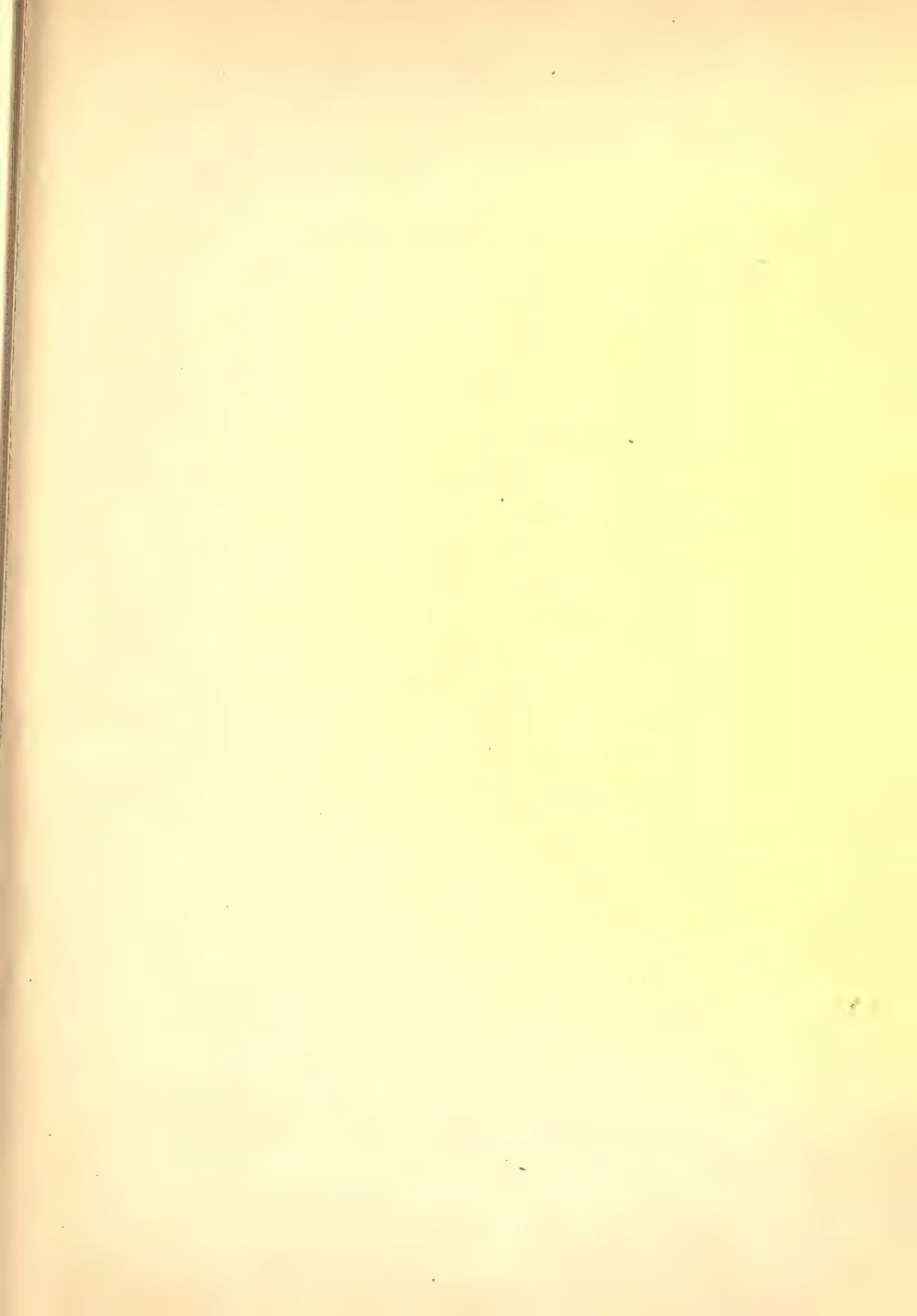
"Which of you will convince me of sin? If I say the truth why do you not believe me?"—John viii. 46.

Exordium.—Four weeks of the holy season of Lent have passed. To-day Holy Mother Church redoubles her efforts to call her children closer to our Blessed Saviour, and to get them to fix their minds more intently upon the great mystery of the Passion.

Our Lord's mission on earth is drawing to its close. He sees that for many it will be a failure. In spite of His labors, His untiring zeal, His inexhaustible kindness, many still remain "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity" (Acts viii. 23).

In the Gospel of to-day He seems to make a last attempt to bring them to their senses by a strong and stern rebuke. They are haughty and vindictive, and "vain in their own conceits." Our Lord condescends to reason with them, and utterly confounds them.

I. Those to whom our Lord speaks are His enemies, and "their name is legion." Not only the Scribes and Pharisees and their followers, who insulted and reviled Him, but all, from that day to this, and to the end of time, who refuse to believe in Him and to accept His doctrine. Infidels, free-thinkers, rationalists—smart and learned men. Fine gentlemen, whose god is mammon, and whose religion is luxury, fashion, culture. And among these must be included unworthy, negligent Christians—even nominal Catholics. All these, whether they intend it or not, are enemies of Christ. "He that doth not believe is already judged (i. e., condemned), because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John





iii. 18). "He that is not with me is against me" (Luke xi. 23). "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. iii. 18).

II. What reasons have they for not believing? Our Lord seems to suppose two: They claim that He is a sinner, and that His teachings are false. "Which of you will convince me of sin?" His whole life was known. For three years He had been under constant observation and strictest scrutiny. He could appeal to His works.

"Many good works have I shewed you from my Father: for which of those works do you stone me?" (John x. 32).

The blind man, whose sight He had restored, said to the chiefs of the Synagogue, "We know that God doth not hear sinners. . . . Unless this man were of God, he could not do anything" (John ix. 31, 33).

They would not believe Him. "If I say the truth, why do you not believe me?"

Proof of His veracity was not wanting. He had told them time and again that He and the Father were one, consequently that He was Truth itself.

Again He could appeal to His works—to His miracles—to the testimony given at His baptism (Luke iii. 22, 23)—to the Holy Scriptures, which gave testimony of Him (John v. 39).

Their only answer was insult, blasphemy, violence. "Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" "They took up stones therefore to throw at him."

III. Why were they so blind and unreasonable?

Our Lord gives the answer: "The grace of God was not in their hearts." "Why do you not know my speech?" He asked them. "Because you can not hear my word. You are of your father,

the devil, and the desires of your father you do. . . . He that is of God heareth the words of God. Therefore you do not hear them, because you are not of God" (John viii. 43, 44, 47). The same reason applies to many at the present day.

Conclusion.—Exhortation to try, first, to bring before the mind as vividly as possible this scene between our Lord and His enemies. His severe arraignment and conviction of them. Second, to realize the sorrow and anguish of His loving heart at being obliged to speak so severely to those for whom He was about to lay down His life. Third, to pray for those who can not hear His words. Lastly, to pray for an ever increasing love for our Lord, and reverence for His teaching.

"Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep my word, he shall not see death forever."

PALM SUNDAY.

INCONSTANCY IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

"With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that considereth in the heart."—Jer. xii. 11.

Exordium.—Brief description of the entry into Jerusalem (Fouard i. 164).

Contrast with what occurred five days later, on the road to Calvary. Impossible to conceive a more striking example of human fickleness or inconstancy.

Our Lord hailed as King on Sunday; hooted, jeered, and buffeted as a malefactor on Thursday; crucified as an impostor and blasphemer on Friday.

Sad to contemplate; but sadder still, to think and to know that the Jews have had, and still have, their imitators, even among Christians.

I. Nature and causes of inconstancy.

We understand by inconstancy, weakness of will; changeableness of purpose; failure to adhere to our resolutions.

It differs widely from hypocrisy. The hypocrite deliberately makes false professions, and persistently keeps up false appearances.

The inconstant person is sincere. Has no intention of deceiving. In fact, seldom deceives or injures any one but himself.

The hypocrite is "a whited sepulchre" (Matt. xxiii. 27).

The inconstant person is "a reed shaken with the wind" (Matt. xi. 7).

In the young, inconstancy may be attributed to their early training and education, or to their own indolence or waywardness. The

result in either case, a lack of proper moral sense. In their case, the seed falls by the wayside, and the birds of the air eat it up (Matt. xiii. 4, 19).

In older persons this inconstancy is frequently the result of habitual indulgence of evil propensities; indifference to the law of God and the precepts of the Gospel. Their hearts are "stony ground."

But the cause which includes or affects all others is, *want of reflection*. People do not think seriously enough of their moral obligations. Do not realize the inconsistency and fatal folly of their actions. "With desolation is all the land made desolate: because there is none that thinketh in his heart."

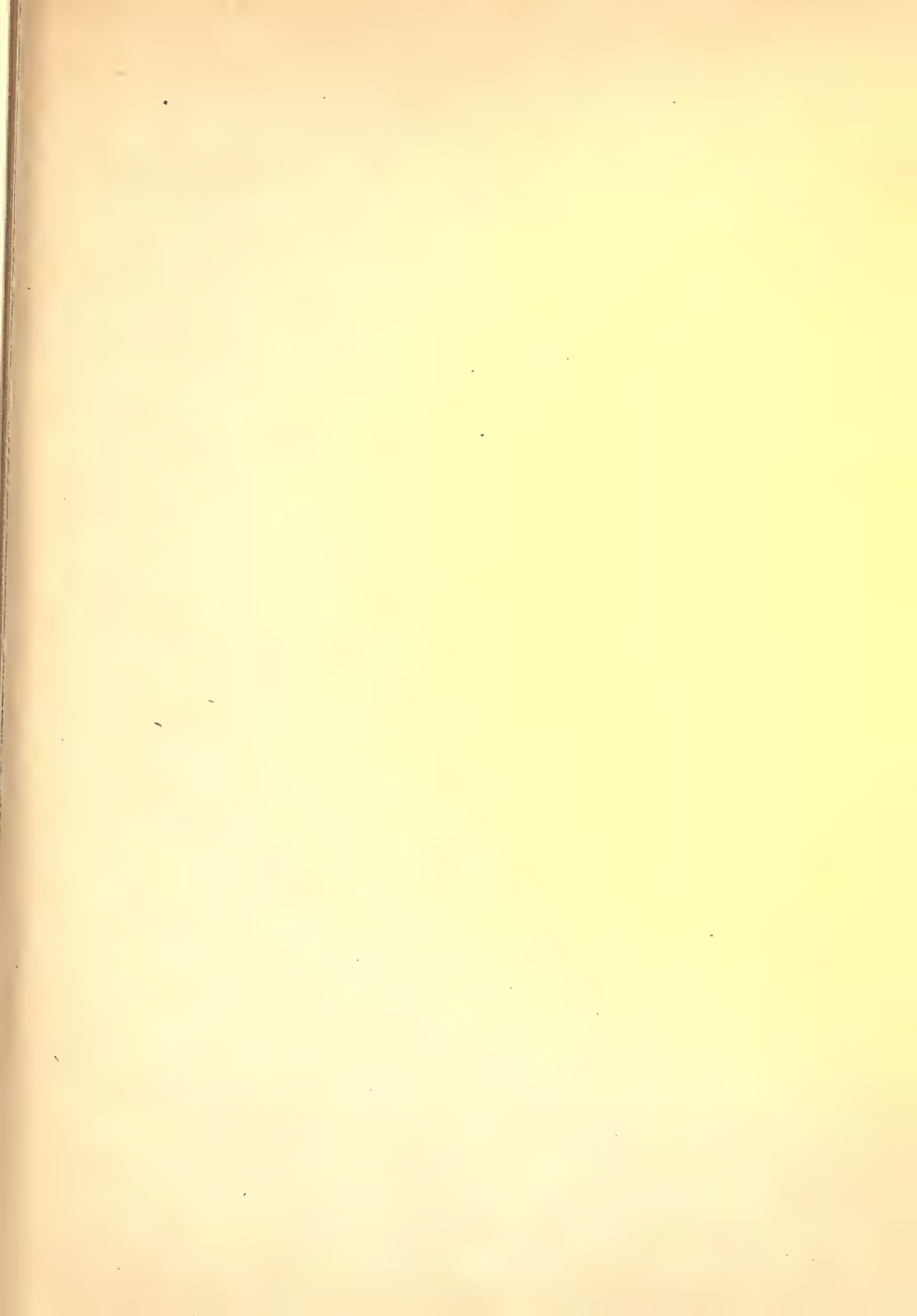
II. With these thoughts before the mind, study carefully the pageant of to-day, and the tragedy so soon to follow.

The lengthy Gospel narrative is the portrayal of the Inconstancy of mankind. *Not of the Jews only*.

Many who call themselves Christians are more guilty than the Jews. The latter did not really know what they were doing. "For if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory" (I. Cor. ii. 8). The former can not plead ignorance. Hence St. Paul does not hesitate to say, "They are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction; whose god is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame; who *mind earthly things*" (Phil. iii. 18).

A strong denunciation (a) of intemperance and gluttony—feasting sumptuously every day, while the poor ask in vain for the crumbs that fall from the table (Luke xvi. 19, 20). (b) Of licentiousness and debauchery.

Can not be denied that inconstancy leads to these excesses. "Stars have fallen from heaven, . . . and such as before fed upon the





bread of angels, I have seen delighted with the husks of swine” (Imit. Bk. iii., Ch. 14).

Many other faults less disgraceful than these, in the eyes of the world, but more frequent, and which must be numbered among the evils of inconstancy: Frequent relapses into sins of anger, resentment, detraction, calumny; unfair and dishonest dealings; profane and indecent language, etc. Some one or more of these often repeated almost immediately after a solemn protestation of sorrow, and promise of amendment, in the tribunal of penance; or within a few hours after Holy Communion. Returning to *the husks of swine, after feeding upon the bread of angels!*

Conclusion.—Bearing the palm branches to-day is a profession of faith in our Divine Saviour, and of loyalty to Him.

A consoling sight to see thousands on the streets, and in their homes with the sacred badges upon their breasts.

May its true meaning sink deep into their hearts.

Exhortation.—To enter into the spirit, and to profit by the graces of Holy Week. To strive to die to sin, in order to rise with Christ and to a new life of fidelity and perseverance. To think seriously, in order to acquire firm, stable convictions—thus avoiding the misfortune of imitating the inconstancy of the Jews.

EASTER SUNDAY,

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.*

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep."—I. Cor. xv. 20.

Exordium.—Cause of our Easter joy. 1. Our redemption accomplished. The ransom paid. The serpent's head is crushed. The handwriting of the decree that was against us is blotted out. "And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (Col. ii. 14). We are reconciled with God, and are no longer children of wrath, but heirs to the kingdom of heaven. 2. Not only has our Lord redeemed our souls from sin, but He has acquired for us another blessing greater than man could ever have hoped for, or even imagined: *The glorious Resurrection of the Body.*

I. The Resurrection of the Body is the distinctive feature of the Easter Mystery.

Christ might have accomplished the work of the redemption in numberless other ways, any one of which would have been acceptable and satisfactory to His Eternal Father. He might even have assumed our human nature just as He did; might have lived just the life He did, in all its details; might by His omnipotence have imparted to His assumed humanity (just as He actually did in the *hypostatic union*) the power to merit, necessary to satisfy the demands of Divine justice; and after all this, He might, had He so wished, have consigned even His own human body—the instrument

* For beautiful thoughts on this subject see "The Happiness of Heaven." by Boudreaux, S.J.

which He had used—to the nothingness from which He had drawn it.

Or, He might have raised up that body alone and carried it glorified into heaven, there to be forever the solitary specimen of what God had intended that man should be.

Having done this, He might have ransomed the souls of men and left their bodies—that flesh, all of which “had corrupted its way”—to the rottenness and corruption of the tomb, as their final destination.

Far grander, nobler, and more worthy of the infinite goodness of God, was the Divine plan, decreed from all eternity. Not only was man’s soul—made to the image and likeness of God—to be saved, but also his body—the work of His hands.

The soul had been created to inhabit the body; the body to be the temple of the soul. The two united formed the creature that God had created, and whom Christ would redeem.

Admirable beauty and harmony of the divine plan! Not the faintest shadow of such a sublime idea ever entered the minds of the greatest sages and philosophers of antiquity.

Could human intelligence, unaided, ever have conceived it?

II. The Resurrection of the Body is a truth divinely revealed.

Numerous texts of Scripture: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. . . . And in my flesh I shall see my God” (Job xix. 25, 26).

“Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: Some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach to see it always” (Dan. xii. 2). “I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy death” (Osee xiii. 14).

Our Divine Saviour, speaking to the Sadducees:

“Now that the dead rise again, Moses also shewed at the bush,

when he calleth the Lord: The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living" (Luke xx. 37, 38).

St. Paul says emphatically: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and *your faith is also vain*" (I. Cor. xv. 13, 14).

III. Beauty and Glory of the Risen Body (Boudreaux, p. 93).

Something upon which few reflect sufficiently; which many refuse to believe—even deny its possibility.

They forget what God is constantly doing with the elements of mere inanimate nature: v. g. The change of a little coal dust, or clay, or sand, and a little useless rust into diamonds, rubies, emeralds, etc. The change of the decomposing seed, through the medium of the elements of the soil and of the atmosphere, of decayed vegetation, and even noxious filth, into the endless variety of beautiful shrubs, flowers, and fruits.

Neither do they heed the inspired words of Holy Writ: This body "is sown in dishonor; it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness; it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body; it shall rise a spiritual body" (I. Cor. xv. 43, 44). It shall rise in glory like unto that of the body of our Blessed Lord himself, "who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory, according to the operation, whereby also he is able to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. iii. 21).

It is said of His Transfiguration, "His face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow" (Matt. xvii. 2).

So He, in speaking of the separation of the just from the wicked, says, "Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43).



Powers of enjoyment possessed by the risen body in heaven :

Perfect health, vigor, beauty, unclouded intelligence, spirituality, agility.

Opportunities of enjoyment: Intercourse with relatives and friends; with all the elect, and with the angelic choirs; with our Blessed Mother, and our Divine Saviour in His glorified humanity. Last, and above all, the Beatific Vision—*the sight of God face to face*.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him” (I. Cor. ii. 9).

How true, therefore, and easy to be understood, are these other words of the apostle:

“When this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” (I. Cor. xv. 54, 55).

Conclusion.—Rejoice in the great mystery we commemorate to-day. Rejoice in the great truth: “Christ is risen from the dead, *the first fruits of them that sleep.*”

Bear in mind, however, the salutary warning of St. Paul: “We shall all indeed rise again; but *we shall not all be changed*” (I. Cor. xv. 51).

Strive for the glorious resurrection. In all trials and misfortunes, afflictions and temptations, in sickness and danger, in infirmity and old age, cherish the consoling hope of holy Job:

“I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and *in my flesh I shall see my God.*”

LOW SUNDAY.

THE POWER OF FAITH.

“This is the victory that overcometh the world, our Faith.”—I. John v. 4.

Exordium.—Explain what is meant by “the world” and by “faith.”

Here, as in very many passages of Holy Scripture, by “the world” is meant, all that is of evil in our earthly surroundings; all that stands, or may come between us and our Sovereign Good; all that tends to make man violate the law of God—and perish, as the inevitable consequence.

By “faith” is here meant that “supernatural gift and light whereby we firmly assent in thought and deed to all that God has revealed and proposed to our belief through his Church.”

Briefly, faith is belief, or assent of the intellect on the authority of God, and because God is Truth itself.

It is a gift of God. Consequently it must be good, and can not be in contradiction with, or in opposition to, any other gift of God.

No contradiction between faith and reason.

It is a light. It illumines the human intellect, and enables it to see and understand many things which it could never have discovered by its own natural power, and to accept, on the authority of God, many others which it can not fully comprehend.

Man following solely the light of his own intelligence is often deceived, especially in the pursuit of what seems to him to be good.

Following honestly and sincerely the light of faith he can never be deceived. God could not delude him with a will-o'-the-wisp.

I. The evil called "the world," by which man is surrounded, and which he has to overcome, is manifold.

Natural tendency of the passions, encouraged and stimulated by bad example on every hand.

False teachers and false maxims, preventing or destroying early moral and religious training.

Consequent ignorance or forgetfulness of our relations with God, and of His claims upon our service and obedience.

Murmurings against the Providence of God, in permitting poverty, sickness, trials, misfortunes, persecutions, etc.

The allurements of riches, honors, luxury, pleasures, entrée into select society, etc. "All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me" (Matt. iv. 9).

Man falls an easy victim to these evils on account of the effects of original sin: "Darkness in his understanding, weakness in his will, and a propensity to evil."

His natural propensity to evil inclines his will to what is bad, in preference to what is good.

The darkness in his intellect prevents him from seeing far enough to avoid his error. He does not see beyond the present life—and forgets, or knows not, how short that may be.

II How faith overcomes "the world."

It is a light—a divine light—a supernatural gift, enlightening the mind and enabling it to see above and beyond the range of mere natural reason and intelligence.

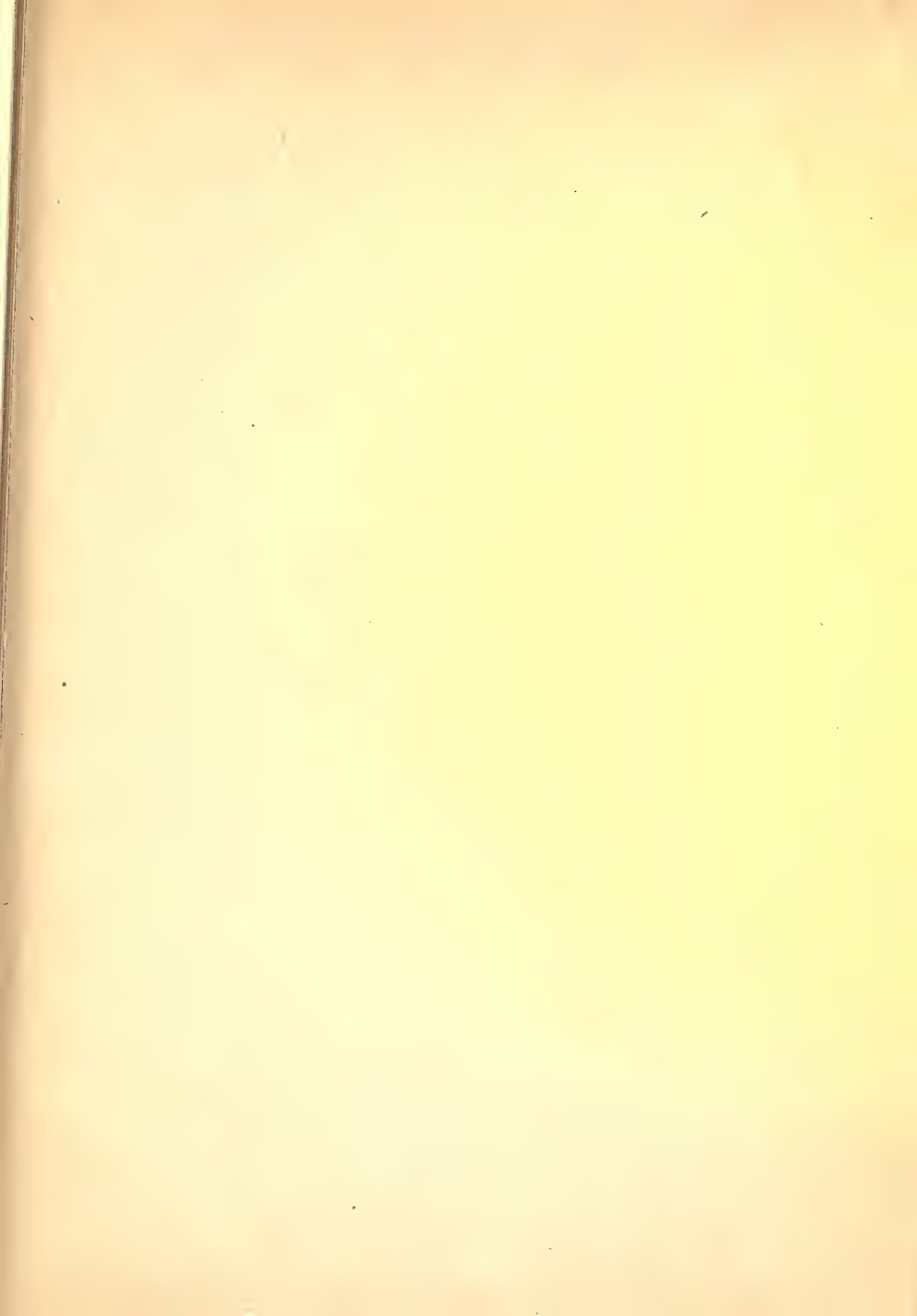
St. Paul, speaking of the patriarchs of old, says, "All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them" (Heb. xi. 13). Hence the same apostle also says, "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" (Heb. xi. 1).

Man enlightened by faith recognizes first of all God as the Author and Giver of all good things, and imitates Abel who "by faith offered to God of the firstlings of his flock, . . . by which he obtained a testimony that he was just" (Gen. iv. 4; Heb. xi. 4).

He hearkens to God's warning of the wrath to come upon evil doers, and like Noe, builds his ark of safety while all the world around him is given over to sin.

Obedient to the special call of God's grace, he is ready, like Abraham, to do His bidding: "Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee" (Gen. xii. 1). If allured by riches, honors, luxury, temptation to basely and foolishly abandon the faith of his earlier years, and ally himself with the votaries of the world, he has the noble example of Moses: Being taken from his parents in his infancy, and reared during childhood and youth up to manhood amidst all the luxury and voluptuous licentiousness of the Egyptian court, he never lost nor abandoned the faith in which he was born, but "when he was grown up, denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God than to have the pleasure of sin for a time. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians. For he looked unto the reward" (Heb. xi. 24-26).

If forced to suffer persecution, sacrifice, and death itself, for conscience' sake, i. e., for the faith, he is strengthened in the words of St. Paul: "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (II. Cor. iv. 17). And the words of our Divine Saviour: "Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul into hell" (Matt. x. 28).





Mindful of these things, and with his reason enlightened and his courage strengthened by that light from on high, he will never fail to proclaim with St. Peter and the other apostles: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29).

Thus faith enlightens reason, gives the true principles of action, explains the problems of life—*conquers the world*.

Conclusion.—Strive to appreciate the inestimable gift of faith. Learn well its relation to reason. Be profoundly grateful for the divine light, and be faithful in following it. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith." "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" (II. Cor. ix. 15).

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me."—John x. 14.

Exordium.—Circumstances in which these words were spoken (à Lapide, John x.).

To-day's Gospel gives the second of two parables spoken by our Lord to the Scribes and Pharisees.

He had just restored sight to the man born blind, by anointing his eyes with clay and spittle (John ix.).

The Jews, as usual, became angry, and vilified and calumniated our Lord.

Tried to make first the parents, and then the man himself, deny the miracle. The parents guilty of base ingratitude and cowardice.

The son, on the contrary, having received the light of grace, as well as corporal vision, exasperates his questioners; and they put him out of the synagogue (John ix. 34).

Meets Jesus a second time, and falling down, adores Him, in presence of the Pharisees (John ix. 38, 40).

The latter begin their attack again, and our Lord excoriates them with the parable of "The door of the sheepfold."

The sheepfold was His Church—of which He was the door. "He that doth not enter by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber" (John x. 1).

Such were they—rejecting Him, and yet pretending to be teachers and leaders of the people.

"But they understood not what He spoke to them" (v. 6).

Jesus, therefore, repeats a second and a third time, "I am the door. If any man enter through the door, he shall be saved. . . . The thief cometh not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (vs. 9, 10).

Then changing the parable, our Lord speaks of Himself as the Shepherd.

I. Our Lord is truly "The Good Shepherd."

Condition of the world when He came:

All mankind were "as sheep without a shepherd" (Num. xxvii. 17).

The Jews alone had kept one true idea—that there was only one God.

But had no idea of the Trinity. Utterly false idea of the Messiah, in spite of all that the prophets had announced (Luke xxiv. 25-27). (Christ to the two disciples of Emmaus).

Their priesthood had become corrupt. Their sacrifices an abomination. "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts: and I will not receive a gift of your hand. . . . You have departed out of the way, and have caused many to stumble at the law: you have made void the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 10; ii. 8).

Abrogation of their office, and utter emptiness of their worship, proclaimed when the sacrifice on Calvary was consummated.

"And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two, from the top even to the bottom" (Matt. xxvii. 51).

The dreaded Holy of Holies more empty than the sepulchre on Easter morn!

The Gentiles worse than the Jews: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man.

. . . And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense" (Rom. i, 22, 23, 28).

Such was the world when our Lord came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10).

He calls His sheep, and some of them know His voice.

Establishes His sheepfold—the Church.

Fortifies it with His divine protection, to keep out thieves, robbers, and wolves: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18).

Appoints a shepherd as His representative in taking care of the fold—giving to Him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Ibid. v. 19), together with the divine commission, "Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep" (John xxi. 16, 17).

Numberless incidents in His life show the tenderness of this Good Shepherd.

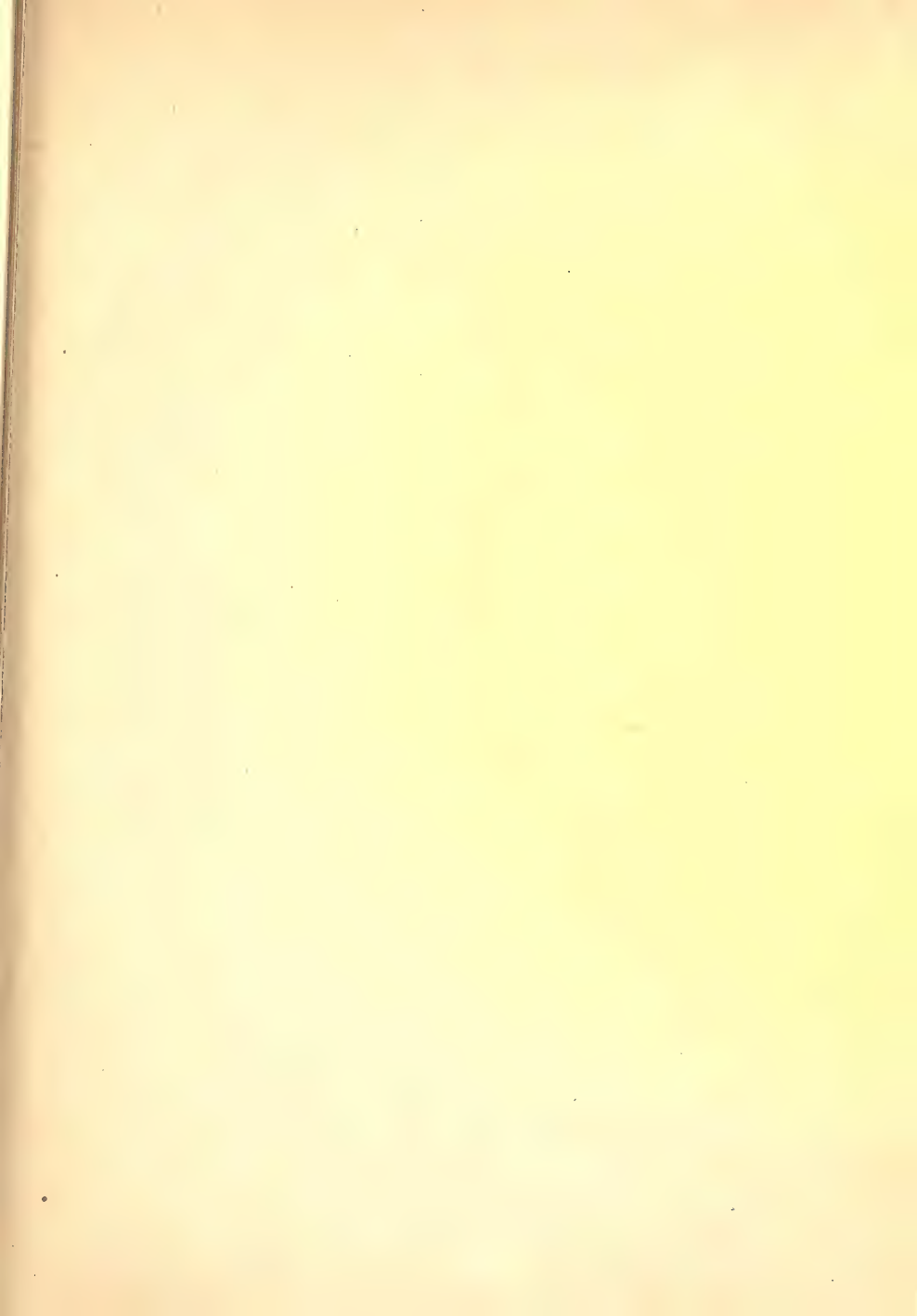
II. "I know mine, and mine know me."

Who are the sheep that belong to the Good Shepherd?

First: Those who are already in the one true fold. Who know the Shepherd and hear His voice. "He that entereth by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John x. 2, 3).

Some, indeed, have refused to hear His voice: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, he gave to them the power to become the sons of God" (John i. 11, 12).

Some have refused to be led by the shepherds whom He appointed. Of these He says to His apostles: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me" (Luke x. 16).





Second: All men are, nevertheless, the sheep of the Good Shepherd. He died for all; and wishes to save all.

"Other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John x. 16).

III. There shall be one fold and one Shepherd.

Such is the will of our Divine Saviour. Doubtless nothing dearer to His Sacred Heart. "I came to cast fire on the earth: and what will I but that it be kindled?" (Luke xii. 49).

This desire of our Lord imposes a great obligation upon those who are of the household of the Faith.

Each one should be an apostle—of charity, of fraternal kindness: "Let every one of you please his neighbor unto good, to edification" (Rom. xv. 2). "Giving no offense to any man, that our ministry be not blamed" (II. Cor. vi. 3).

Preaching by example: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

Avoiding anything that might give scandal. "Having your conversation good among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by the good works which they shall behold in you, glorify God in the day of visitation" (I. Peter ii. 12).

Praying earnestly for those who are not of the fold. That they may have a sincere desire to know the truth, and the courage to follow it. That they may not "harden their hearts" when they hear "the voice of the Lord" (Ps. xciv. 8). That they may, on the contrary, say with little Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (I. Kings iii. 10). Or with the conquered Saul, "Lord, what will thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6). Or with St. Peter when he saw the apparently impassable deep between himself and

the doubtful spectre of the truth: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters" (Matt. xiv. 28).

Conclusion.—Exhortation: Love for the Good Shepherd; obedience to His voice. Gratitude for having been called to the true fold. Zeal in action, and earnestness in prayer, that the fondest desire in our Good Shepherd's heart may be realized; that the other sheep may hear His voice, and that *there may be one Sheepfold and one Shepherd.*

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BEARING TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS.

"You now indeed have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you."—John xvi. 22.

Exordium.—Circumstances in which these words were spoken: At the Last Supper. The wretched Judas had departed on his diabolical mission. The great Sacrament of Love had been instituted; and our blessed Lord unbosomed Himself to the faithful eleven. Told them that He was going to prepare a place for them; that He was "the way and the truth and the life;" that He would not leave them orphans; that His Father would send them the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost; that He himself was the true vine, and they the branches. Exhorted them to abide in His love. Called them, *not servants, but friends* (John xiv., xv.).

Finally, just before offering up His prayer for them to His eternal Father, and just before going forth to His agony in the garden, He spoke to them of the trials, sorrows, and sufferings which were to be their portion—and of the joy that was to follow, if they were faithful unto the end (John xvi.).

What He said to His disciples, He meant equally for all Christians—for all men, since He died for all, that all might be saved (cf. Maldonatus, John xvi. 20).

I. The trials and sufferings of this life must be borne with patience, and resignation to the will of God.

It is, however, conformable to the will of God to try, by legitimate means, to avoid or escape these so-called evils; v. g.: to avoid poverty, by industry, prudence, and frugality. To preserve health,

and avoid disease and premature death, by leading a sober, moral life, and by employing all lawful and available means.

It is not only morally right to flee from danger, but it is morally wrong to expose one's self to it—except for some noble or generous purpose; v. g.: to defend one's country; to save human life, etc. Needless to add that it is even lawful to pray to be freed from any or all of these evils.

But what can not be escaped by one or another of these means must be borne with resignation to the will of God:

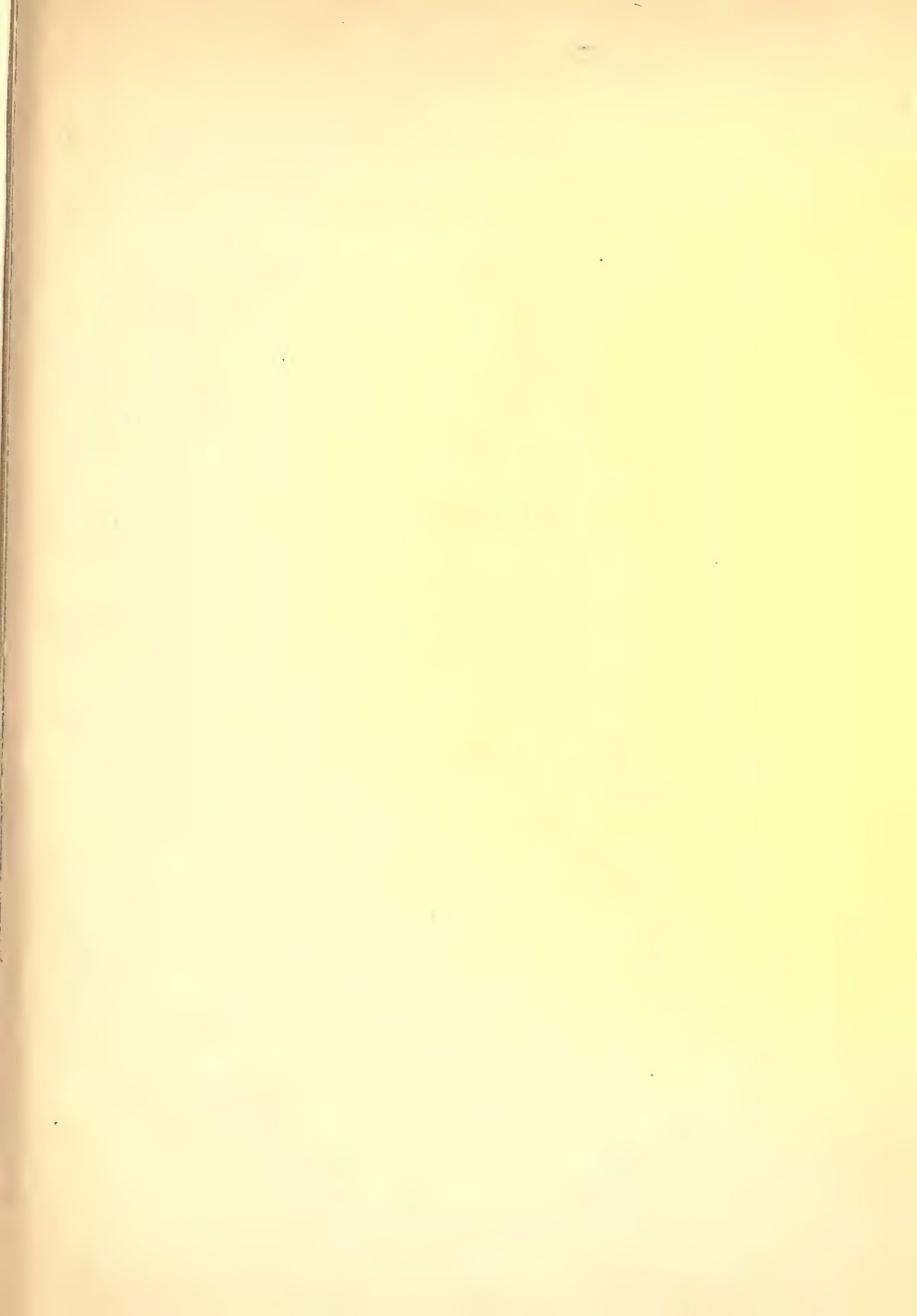
(a) Because they are not real evils, i. e., they can not hurt the soul; they do not separate us from God; they do not render us displeasing to Him; they place no obstacle between us and Him. In a word, they are not sin—and sin is the only evil. “Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul” (Matt. x. 28).

“Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?” (Rom. viii. 35).

If any of these sufferings had in them the least germ of sin, our Lord would surely have banished them from the world.

(b) He himself endured them all. Therefore must we also bear them; for “The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough that the disciple be as his master and the servant as his lord” (Matt. x. 24, 25, cf. *Imitat.*, bk. iii., ch. xii.).

II. These temporal trials and sufferings are frequently blessings. Worldly prosperity and happiness seldom draw men nearer to God; often cause them to turn away from Him, and forget Him. Often make them lose the simplicity of faith, and abandon the practice of it. Daily experience and observation prove this. More have lost the faith through prosperity than through adversity. On the contrary, trials, misfortunes, sorrows force us to turn to the God





of consolation—the only unfailing good. Hence the wise man says: “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. The heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth” (Eccles. vii. 3, 5).

Our Lord himself numbers these sufferings among the beatitudes: “Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for you shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for you shall laugh. Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the son of man’s sake. Be glad in that day and rejoice; for behold your reward is great in heaven” (Luke vi. 20-23).

Those who possess riches, and make good use of them, have nevertheless their share of trials and sorrows, and consequently their share in the promised reward.

Not so with those who find their happiness in this world, and are contented with it, who, in the midst of their prosperity, neglect to pay homage to God, and refuse to honor Him in His poorer members: “Wo to you that are rich: for you have your consolation. Wo to you that are filled: for you shall hunger. Wo to you when men shall bless you” (Luke vi. 24-26).

Why this last malediction? Because the blessing (i. e., praise) is undeserved. The acts by which they gain the applause of men are reprehensible in the sight of God. Moreover, such praise is hollow, deceitful, inconstant. “According to these things did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke vi. 24-26).

III. The trials and sufferings of this life bring their reward. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (i. e., trial), for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath prepared for them that love him” (Jas. i. 12).

“For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory” (II. Cor. iv. 17).

Our Lord himself has promised us this: “You shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy” (John xvi. 20).

The saints and martyrs in all ages have believed Him, and have acted accordingly.

Conclusion.—Exhortation to bear patiently the trials and sufferings of this life. Only those who have no faith, and those who have long and grievously resisted the grace of God, refuse to bear them, or can not understand their true import.

Confidence in our Lord’s consoling words: “You now indeed have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you.”

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

CHRIST'S ENEMIES CONVICTED.

"And when he (the Paraclete) is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment."—John xvi. 8.

Exordium.—Here, as in many other passages of the New Testament, the word *world* means the enemies, or opponents of Christ, including, first, the Jews of His own day, who strove against Him; secondly, the Gentiles who refused to receive the Gospel preached to them by the apostles; thirdly, infidels of all ages who have refused to believe in Him.

A careful reading of the Gospel will show that our Lord always acted on the defensive in dealing with His enemies. Was satisfied with reducing them to silence, and preventing their arguments from having any weight with their hearers; v. g., silencing the Pharisees in the discussion about the Christ (Matt. xxii. 41-46). "And no man was able to answer him a word." After His answer to the question, "Which was the first commandment of all?" (Mark xii. 28-34) "And no man after that durst ask him any question." When He had replied to the question about paying tribute to Cesar (Luke xx. 26), "They could not reprehend his word before the people; and wondering at his answer, *they held their peace.*" When the Jews threatened to stone Him for saying, "I and the Father are one," He meekly replied, "Many good works I have shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me?" (John x. 30-32). Even when His patience seemed to be well nigh exhausted by their boldness and malice in accusing Him of casting out devils by Beelzebub, He still remained on the defensive,

asking with quiet majesty, "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" (John viii. 46).

Such was His meek and gentle policy while on earth.

But He and the Father and the Holy Ghost were one. He had done His allotted part. There was but one enemy that He intended to vanquish utterly—*the devil*. His other enemies were to be overcome by the Holy Ghost (cf. Maldonatus, John xvi. 8).

This is what we are told in the Gospel to-day.

I. How will the Holy Ghost convince men of things they do not believe, and even do not wish to believe?

By illuminating the intellect—placing facts and truths before it so plainly that reason is forced to assent (cf. Manning, Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost, Ch. II.).

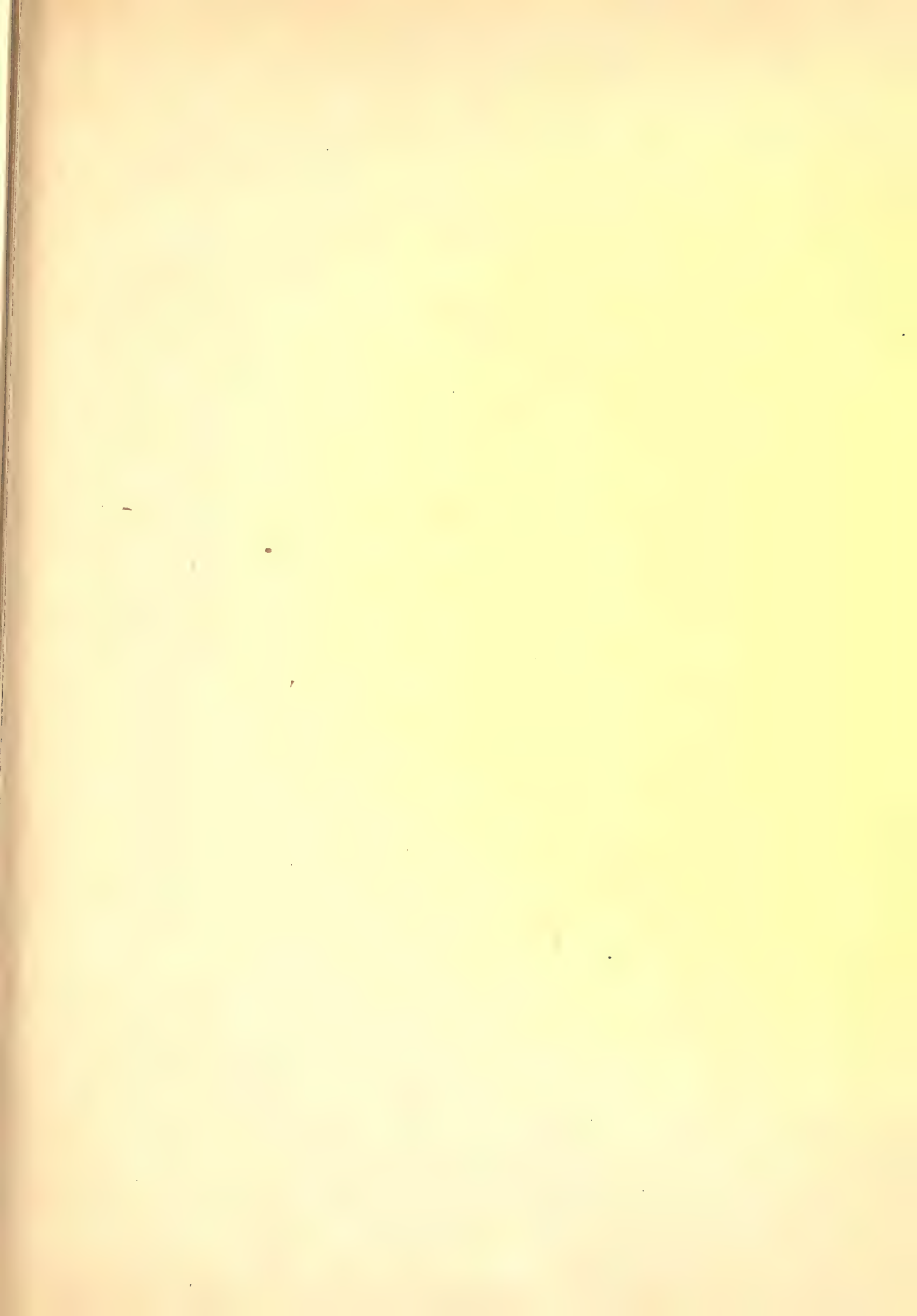
This is no doubt frequently done by direction of the Holy Ghost in individual cases.

God only knows how many are thus convinced and refuse to acknowledge it.

Internal conviction, but no external profession. Light received; grace rejected. "With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10, cf. Kenrick and à Lapide, in loco).

Frequently this light of the Holy Ghost comes through intermediate agents or causes; v. g., by the preaching of the apostles on Pentecost. At the occasion of a sermon, a religious ceremony, a mission, etc.

II. How then are we to understand the words of to-day's Gospel? First, the Holy Ghost will convince *the world*, i. e., the enemies and opponents of Christ, that they are culpably wrong in rejecting Him and in refusing to believe in Him on the testimony they have—the testimony of the Scriptures; the testimony of our Lord Himself; the





testimony of His works; the testimony of His Eternal Father; the testimony of His apostles.

They had sinned therefore in refusing to believe: "Of sin: because they believed not in me." "Therefore I said to you, that you shall die in your sins. For if you believe not that I am, you shall die in your sin" (John viii. 24).

Second, the Holy Ghost will convince the world of justice, i. e., will make them see the justice of Christ, that He was truly what He claimed to be—the Just One, and not an impostor; that He is the principle of all justification; that He and His Father are truly one. "Of justice; because I go to the Father" (sic Maldonatus; aliter, à Lapide, q. v.).

Third, the Holy Ghost will convince the world "of judgment: because the prince of this world is already judged," i. e., as Christ has already judged and vanquished the devil—"the prince of this world," so will the Holy Ghost make those who follow the inspirations and false maxims of the devil feel in their hearts (though they may not confess it with their lips and mend their ways) that they, too, are condemned, and have no part with God, or with Christ our Saviour (sic et Maldonatus et à Lapide).

Conclusion.—Profound admiration for the meekness and patience of our blessed Lord in His dealings with the world. Love and gratitude for His goodness and tenderness in sending us the Paraclete to teach us all truth. Faithful correspondence to the lights thus received, not only believing and accepting, but making open, honest, and courageous profession of belief in our Lord Jesus Christ and in all the truths of divine revelation.

"With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth we will make confession unto salvation."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

PRAYER.

"Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you shall receive; that your joy may be full."—John xvi. 24.

Exordium.—No duty or practice in Christian life more frequently insisted upon. None probably to which more time is given *in the aggregate*, by Christians, though many neglect it almost entirely. And yet there is perhaps no other serious human act so frequently performed imperfectly, unreasonably, and even fruitlessly.

Why? Because many fail to realize the necessity of prayer, and pay but little attention to the manner in which it should be offered up.

Prayer may be defined, "An elevation of the mind and heart to God, to offer Him our homage of praise and thanksgiving, and to represent to Him our needs and our sufferings."

Prayer is a duty, a necessity, and a consolation.

But there are certain conditions requisite in prayer, in order that it may be efficacious.

I. *Prayer is a duty:* We are God's creatures. He is our first beginning and our last end. He is our sovereign, infinite good. The one necessary, indispensable cause of all our happiness. Without His preserving hand we would relapse into nothingness. Without His merciful providence, and His bountiful grace, our lot would be constant suffering in this life; eternal perdition in the next. He is our Father.

What greater obligations could there be for offering up daily and

even hourly the homage of praise and thanksgiving? (cf. Gaume, ii. 314).

Prayer is a necessity: It is the daily bread of the soul. The body can as well live without food and air as the soul without recourse to prayer. Our Lord tells us to ask for this "daily bread,"—and how to ask for it.

We do not realize the necessity, because we do not realize our condition. This the true cause of negligence and lukewarmness. "Because thou sayest: I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Apoc. iii. 17).

Prayer is a consolation: What more natural, and more consoling than to go to a faithful, loving friend, to a kind and generous benefactor, in time of trial, of need, of misfortune, sorrow, bereavement?

This we are told, invited, urged to do: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Ps. liv. 23). "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28).

II. Humility, attention and earnestness, and confidence, are some of the requisite conditions in prayer.

(a) Humility: Acknowledging, like the poor publican (Luke xviii. 13), that we are only sinners, and appealing to the mercy and bounty of God, who "resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (Jas. iv. 6), and who "hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble" (Luke i. 52). "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds" (Ecclus. xxxv. 21).

(b) Attention and earnestness: Think what you need to say, and intend to say. Prayer said by rote, or listlessly read out of a book, is utterly worthless: "This people honoreth me with their lips: but

their heart is far from me " (Matt. xv. 8). " Before prayer prepare thy soul; and be not as a man that tempteth God " (Ecclus. xviii. 23).

Earnestness—perseverance—importunity: " The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away " (Matt. xi. 12., cf. Kendrick, in loco).

Examples.—The Syrophenician woman (Mark vii. 27). The man asking for bread of his neighbor at night (Luke xi. 5-13).

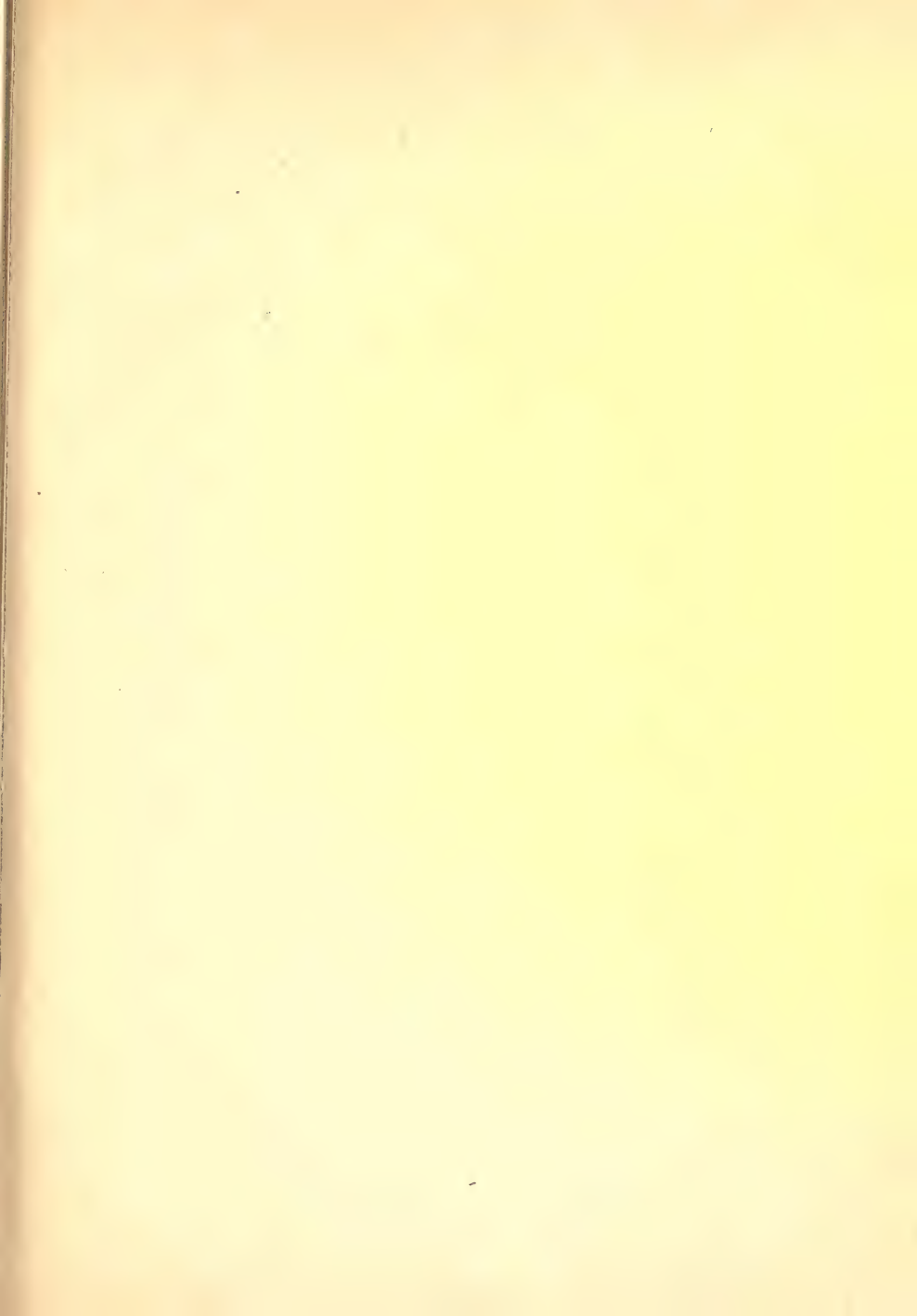
(c) Confidence: Knowing that God is a good, tender, and compassionate Father: " If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him? " (Luke xi. 13). " All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive " (Matt. xxi. 22).

All these qualities are invariably found in the prayer of the beggar: He knows what he wishes to obtain; prepares his petition carefully; presents it earnestly and with importunity; is not easily silenced until he gets at least a part of what he asks. Appears in a pitiable plight; pleads poverty, misery, etc. Feels confident of succeeding, if the person to whom he appeals is known to be kind and generous.

If our Heavenly Benefactor were appealed to in like manner, our prayers would be more pleasing to Him, and would never go unanswered.

Conclusion.—Recall the three reasons for prayer: *Duty, necessity, consolation.* Also the qualities, or requisite conditions.

Exhortation to fidelity in prayer: In the morning, as an offering to God. At night, in thanksgiving for the blessings of the day. In dangers, temptations, and afflictions, as a petition to the one all-powerful Protector, and unfailing source of consolation.





Recall the words of our blessed Lord: "That we ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1). "Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41).

"Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened."

"Ask, and you shall receive; that your joy may be full."

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

TWO KINDS OF PERSECUTION.

"These things will they do to you; because they have not known the Father nor me."—John xvi. 3.

Exordium.—Our Lord warns His disciples that they were to endure violent and cruel persecutions for His sake.

St. Paul tells us that such is the lot of all faithful followers of our divine Saviour: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II. Tim. iii. 12).

An undeniable fact, even one to be proud of, that Catholics have in all ages had much to suffer on account of their faith.

Persecution, in a broad sense, may be taken to mean, whatever is done by those not of the faith that tends directly to the destruction, or abandonment, or denial of it. In this sense we may distinguish two kinds of persecutions which Catholics have to suffer.

1. Unavoidable persecutions, such as those referred to by our Lord.
2. Persecutions to which they voluntarily expose themselves.

I. Unavoidable persecutions: Coming from those who hate the name of God—deny His personal existence.

From those who hate Christianity—as Saul, "breathing threats and vengeance" (Acts ix. 1).

From those who hate the Catholic Church because they really believe that she holds and teaches false and demoralizing doctrines.

From others, who, in bad faith, knowingly and maliciously proclaim all manner of lies and calumnies against the Church and its members. Catholics individually, and as a body, not unfrequently

have to suffer from unjust discrimination in business transactions, in civil offices, in matters of education, etc.

Though the days of violence have passed, and bigotry has waned, there still remains enough to verify the predictions of our Lord and the apostle.

II. Persecutions to which Catholics voluntarily and culpably expose themselves.

(a) By associating with persons who acknowledge no moral restraint imposed by either the law of God, or the teachings of any creed.

With persons who habitually scoff at the teachings and practices of Catholic faith.

Such association means either persecution or virtual apostasy; i. e., ceasing to be practical Catholics.

Young people of both sexes too frequently fall into this snare. Older persons, through various worldly motives, go out of their proper sphere, place themselves in these fatal surroundings; all true sense of religion banished from their lives and from their homes. Children reared in ignorance of the faith, and in an atmosphere hostile to it. Seeds of future loss of faith sown.

(b) Voluntary exposure, by marriage, with the class of persons already mentioned. Some notoriously immoral. Some utterly indifferent to all religion. Some positively opposed to the Catholic faith.

The numbers that plunge heedlessly or deliberately into this danger. The evils told and untold resulting therefrom.

There are, indeed, cases of mixed marriages in which the non-Catholic parties are kind, devoted, irreproachable in their lives, and scrupulously faithful to their promise of non-interference.

Certainly not persecutors, in any sense of the word.

But what about the faith, and the religious convictions of a child

whose Protestant mother is evidently a better Christian than his Catholic father, or whose father, professing no religion, is more sober, kind, respectable, charitable than some of his Catholic relatives and neighbors?

For the evils here to be dreaded Catholics themselves are solely and terribly responsible.

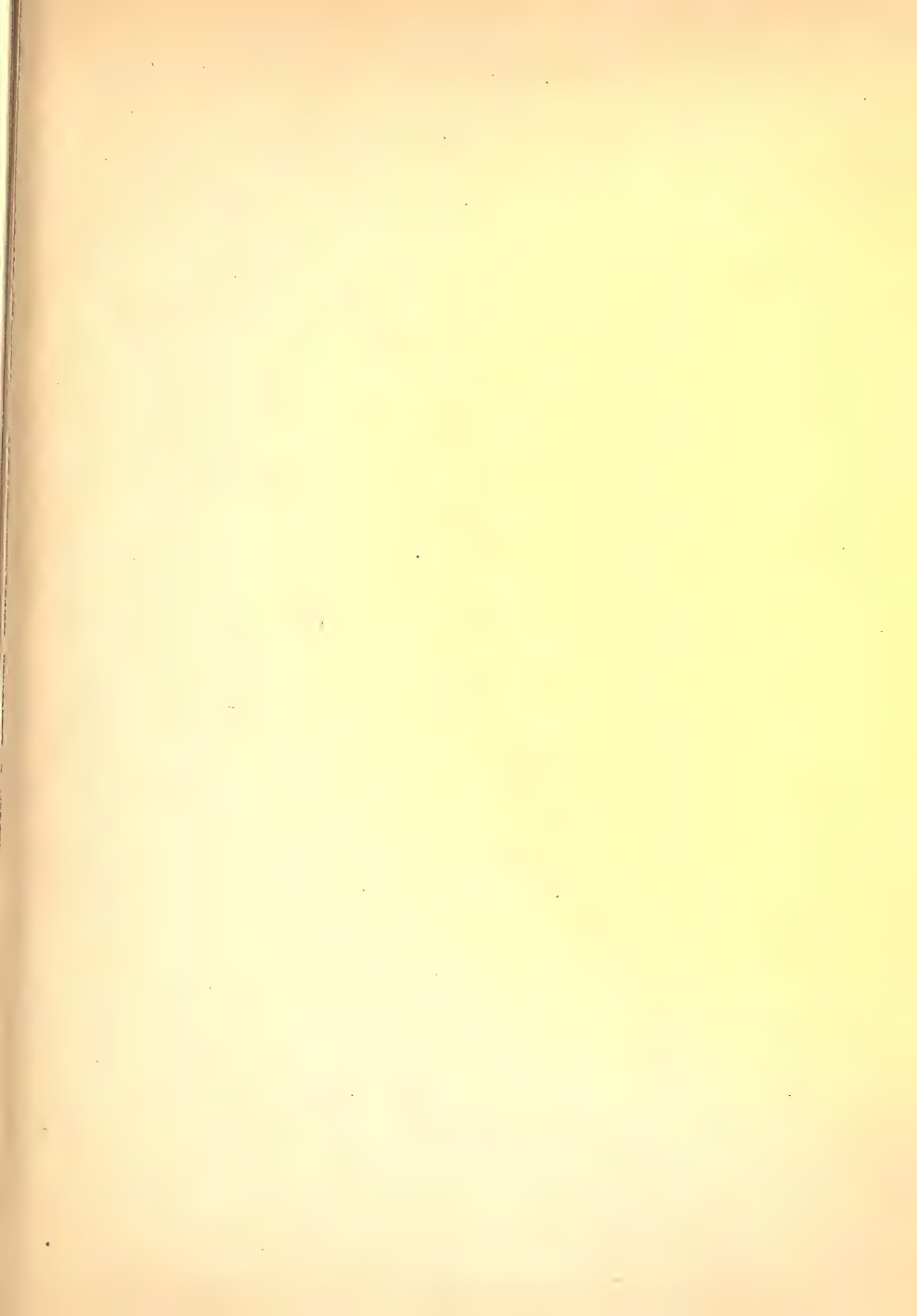
III. Duty in regard to persecutions.

Those that are not of our own making must be borne in the spirit of the Gospel: "I say to you: pray for them that persecute and calumniate you," is the command of our blessed Lord (Matt. v. 44). "Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not. To no man rendering evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as is in you, having peace with all men" (Rom. xii. 14, 17, 18). Harsh, vindictive defense reproved by our Lord. Rebuked the impetuous Peter for cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest: "Put up again thy sword into its place. For all that take the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matt. xxvi. 52). And James and John, for wishing to call down fire from heaven upon the unfriendly Samaritans: "You know not of what spirit you are" (Luke ix. 55). A duty, however, to expose error and proclaim the truth. Every Catholic should be instructed in his faith, and able to defend it. Those of better educational advantages, should be its champions, when occasion requires. More reading of Catholic literature and Catholic history.

The best defense: A good, consistent, Christian life. "So let your light shine before men," etc. (Matt. v. 16).

"Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21).

"Giving no offense to any man, that our ministry be not blamed" (II. Cor. vi. 3).





As to those who expose themselves to attacks on their faith. The fault is entirely theirs. Deplorable folly. Renouncing their noble heritage. Forfeiting their manhood and self-respect. Cringing before, and fawning upon, those who *insult their mother*. Leaving their father's house to feed upon *the husks of swine*.

"As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that leaveth his place" (Prov. xxvii. 8). "Abide not in the works of sinners, but trust in God and stay in thy place" (Ecclus. xi. 22). "If sinners entice thee, consent not to them" (Prov. i. 10). "Bear not the yoke with unbelievers. For what part hath justice with injustice?" (II. Cor. vi. 14). "He that is not with me is against me" (Luke xi. 23). "He that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God" (Luke xii. 9).

Conclusion.—Bear persecutions patiently: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice; for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v. 11).

Be charitable to those who persecute, whether through malice, ignorance, or blind prejudice: "These things they will do unto you; because they have not known the Father, nor me."

Be zealous; making the faith respected by the example of a good life: "Giving no offense to any man."

Finally, pray for those who foolishly expose themselves to persecution, and to loss of faith.

"For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever of good fame; if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things. And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 8, 7).

PENTECOST SUNDAY.

DEVOTION TO THE HOLY GHOST.*

"He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I have said to you."—John xiv. 26.

Exordium.—Summary of the wonders of Pentecost. The mysterious manifestation of the Spirit of God. The apostles "filled with the Holy Ghost." Endowed with miraculous power of speech and unwonted courage. The large and motley crowd "out of every nation under heaven." Very few, if any, believers in Christ. Many who knew nothing whatever about Him.

Doubtless all His enemies were there, glorying in what they had done to Him.

Wonderful effect of the preaching of the apostles: "Are not all these that speak Galileans? And how have we heard every one in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (Acts ii. 7, 8).

Three thousand "received the word and were baptized that day." Became at once fervent, steadfast Christians (Acts ii. 41).

All this the work of the Holy Ghost—the Paraclete promised by our Lord.

Devotion to the Holy Ghost. 1. For what it does for the mystical body of Christ—the Church. 2. For what it does for every human being. 3. Especially for members of the Church.

I. What the Holy Ghost does for the Church:

Enlightens and guides its teachers—the successors of the apostles—popes, bishops, and priests.

* Cf. *Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, Manning, pp. 13-35; 345.

Enables them to understand the mysteries of God, and to teach them to others.

Enlightens the multitudes; moves their hearts; and holds them together in the bonds of faith—"abiding with them forever."

Our Lord accomplished the work of our redemption by suffering. Part of this suffering was from the contradictions of His enemies: "Behold this child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel; and for a sign that shall be contradicted" (Luke ii. 34). Part was from the ignorance of those who were well disposed—even of His chosen ones. Was obliged to tell them, at the very end of His earthly mission, "I have yet many things to say to you: but you can not bear them now" (John xvi. 12). He could have avoided these contradictions, and overcome this ignorance; but this work was left to the Holy Ghost.

The wisdom of God "reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wis. viii. 1).

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever. . . . He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I have said to you" (John xiv. 16, 26).

"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth. He will glorify me. Because he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it to you" (John xvi. 13, 14).

This promise fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

The apostles enlightened. The people made to understand.

Christ is glorified. The Church springs into existence, to endure to the end of time under the guidance of the Spirit of truth.

II. The Holy Ghost enlightens all men individually—Jew and gentile, infidel, pagan, and heathen (cf. Manning, *supra*, pp. 18, 19).

“God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I. Tim. ii. 4). But “no man cometh to the Father but by me,” says our Lord (John xiv. 6). “And no man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost” (I. Cor. xii. 3).

Hence all men need the light of the Holy Ghost.

All men receive light enough from the Holy Ghost to enable them to discern the truths necessary to them for salvation—since God wills all men to be saved.

Many, very many, reject this light—turn away from it—grope in darkness. “Men love darkness rather than light, because their works are evil” (John iii. 19).

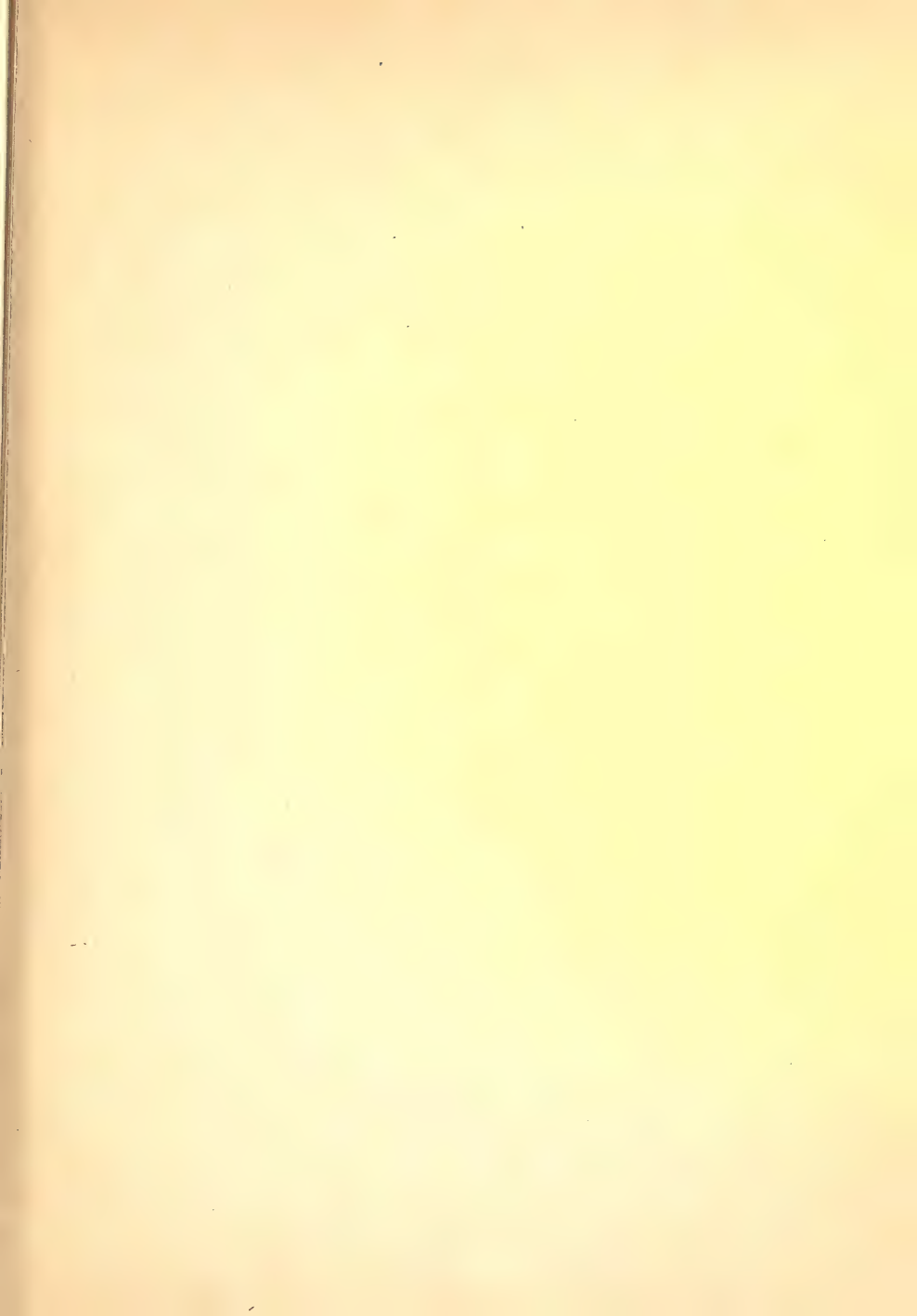
Some such were in the crowd on Pentecost day. Absurdity of their charge against the apostles. Strange reason why the latter should have been so well understood.

Rejection of the light of the Holy Ghost, the reason why so many are utterly unable to grasp religious truths.

Exclude themselves from the supernatural order—the spiritual atmosphere in which God wills that all men should live. “The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he can not understand” (I. Cor. ii. 14).

III. What the Holy Ghost does for the members of Christ’s mystical body. In baptism. In confirmation. In all the sacraments. In their daily life. In the ordination of priests, and in the consecration of bishops—whereby the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ is perpetuated on earth. Thus “The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us” (Rom. v. 5). “And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father” (Gal. iv. 6).

Conclusion.—Far more distinct personal devotion to the Holy Ghost—just as to the Father and the Son.



Habitual sense of His presence, and of the need of His light and guidance. Seek His aid in prayer. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. viii. 26).

Fidelity in cooperating with the grace of the Holy Ghost. Obey His inspirations. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (I. Kings iii. 10). "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God: whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephes. iv. 30).

Finally love and gratitude.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen" (II. Cor. xiii. 13).

TRINITY SUNDAY.

THE BLESSED TRINITY, THE CHRISTIAN GOD.

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”—Matt. xxviii. 19.

Exordium.—The wonderful mystery of the Trinity, the basis of Christianity (cf. Gaume,* II. 157).

Vague idea and obscure traditions concerning a Trinity prior to the Christian era, even among pagans (Genius of Christianity, Ch. III.). Man in his fallen nature prone to idolatry—the worship of many gods.

Jehovah was obliged to deal severely with His chosen people to wean them from this error. Hence He would not reveal to them clearly the mystery of the Trinity, lest it should be a stumbling-block to them. Besides, in the sublime economy of the redemption and regeneration of mankind, the work of the Holy Ghost was to follow that of the Son.

Hence the difference in the new law: With the coming of the Saviour came also the full revelation of this great and adorable mystery.

I. The revelation: The way partially prepared by the Messianic prophecies: “The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son” (Ps. ii. 7). “The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand” (Ps. cix. 1). “Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel”—*God with us* (Is. vii. 14). “A child is born to us, and a son is given to us . . . and his name

* Catechism of Perseverance.

shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty . . . the Prince of Peace" (Is. ix. 6).

All these prophecies undeniably fulfilled in our Lord. At His baptism the testimony of the Father is heard: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;" and at the same time the Holy Ghost appears in visible shape (Matt. iii. 16, 17).

The Son, in turn, gives testimony to the Holy Ghost: "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may remain with you forever" (John xiv. 16). "When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me" (John xv. 26). "But when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will teach you all truth" (John xvi. 13). Finally our Lord commands His apostles to preach and to baptize not in His name alone, but in the name of the three divine Persons: "Going, teach all nations," etc.

II. The mystery explained to us by the Church:

Distinction, equality, divine attributes of the three Persons. Each infinite, each omnipotent, each true God. Yet not three Gods, but one God (Gaume ii. 156; Athanasian Creed).

A mystery utterly beyond the grasp of human reason. Yet it commends itself to our reason. God would not be God if we could *comprehend* all His acts and all His attributes—if we could fathom His nature.

The limited can not measure the unlimited—the infinite. But there can be practical knowledge, and more than moral certainty, without *complete comprehension*.

All nature is full of mysteries—things we can not comprehend. Men themselves create mysteries for their less intelligent fellow men.

All great inventions are things incomprehensible to the vast majority of people, even to those who use them and profit by them.

The inventor, or the glib-tongued agent may explain them, and the explanation will be accepted with absolute confidence, as being true, though not understood.

Who, then, will deny the power of God to reveal things above our comprehension? Or who will reject the authority of Him who is truth itself and infinite knowledge?

The mystery of the Trinity, therefore, no stumbling-block to human reason. God has lifted just "so much of the veil as will enable us to see what is useful and profitable to us, and no more" (Christian Heritage, 292). Let no one dare seek for more, for "He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory" (Prov. xxv. 27, and Eccles. iii. 22. Cf. Kenrick in utroque).

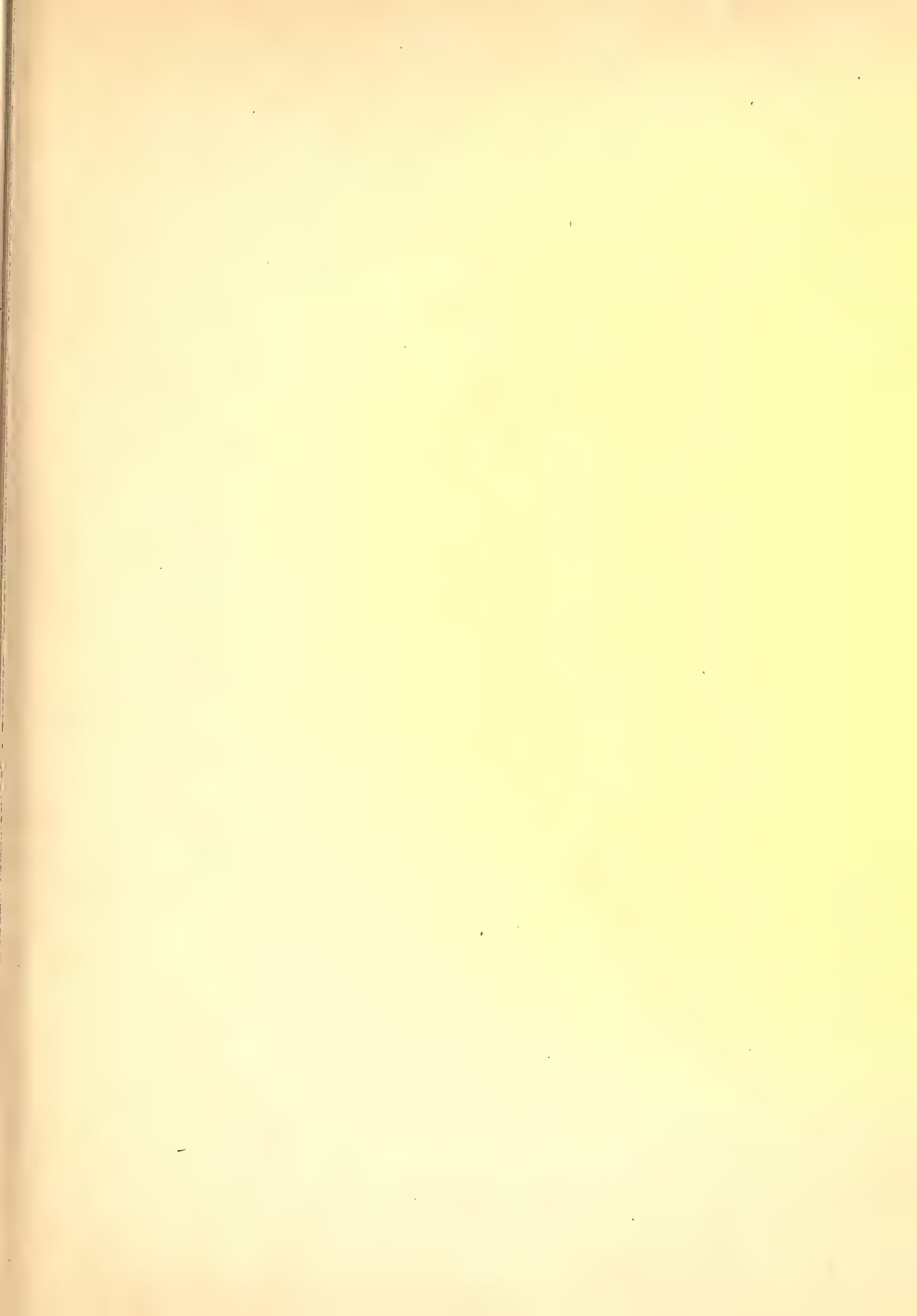
III. The adorable mystery of the Trinity brings us nearer to our personal God—gives us a clearer insight into His nature. We can not contemplate God in all His essential relations to us, *at once*. We need to consider Him under different aspects—in different relations. This the mystery of the Trinity enables us to do.

We contemplate and adore Him as our Father: Our finite reason fails to fathom the depths of goodness, bounty, love, implied in that endearing title.

We contemplate Him as our Saviour, Redeemer, Mediator, Advocate. Inexhaustible source of ennobling, consoling thought. We contemplate Him as the Holy Spirit, the Illuminator of our intellect, the Teacher of all truth, the Sanctifier of our spiritual being the Strengtheners of our vacillating will.

What grander or more consoling than this triple concept of the one Almighty, Eternal God!

Conclusion.—"Thanks to God for this unspeakable gift" of divine revelation. Thanks to our blessed Saviour for the command He gave to His apostles.



Thanks to them and to their successors for having been so faithful to their mission.

Thanks to Holy Mother Church for instructing us in this mystery, and for keeping it constantly before our minds in her prayers and hymns, in the recitation of the Psalms, and in the beautiful Christian practice of the Sign of the Cross.

“We invoke thee, we praise thee, we adore thee, O blessed Trinity!” “Glory be to the Father,” etc.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD AND THE BLINDNESS OF MAN.

"I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper."—Luke xiv. 24.

Exordium.—This beautiful parable easily admits of various interpretations and applications (cf. à Lapide, in loco; Maldonatus in Matt. xxii.).

One interpretation is, that it represents, 1. The efforts which God made through our divine Saviour, His Son (cf. Parable in Matt. xxii.), and is still making, to bring men to a knowledge of the truth and to the possession of eternal happiness; 2. The folly and blindness of very many who refuse or neglect to profit by this goodness of God.

I. The goodness of God: He makes "a great supper." Prepares for man happiness, riches, and enjoyment of which he has no conception: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (I. Cor. ii. 9).

He invites many: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst forever" (John iv. 13). "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger: and he that believeth in me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35).

He sends His servant to notify those who had been "invited"—who had had ample opportunities of knowing who He was, and what His banquet meant. They do not come.

The second time He sends His servant "into the streets and lanes,"

not to "invite" again "the rich and the proud and the mighty," but to "bring in the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame."

Even yet there is room. The third time He sends the servant into "the highways and hedges," and "compels" them to come in, in order that "His house may be filled."

True picture of the dealings of God with man.

II. The blindness of man in dealing with God:

The first call or invitation was given to the Jews—to the intelligent and learned and prosperous ones of the world.

They should have understood and appreciated it.

The same invitation is still constantly given; and still ignored in precisely the same way, by the same class of persons.

The excuses offered are in direct opposition to the teachings and maxims of the Gospel.

"I have bought a farm, and must needs go and see to it." Over-anxiety about the riches and the goods of earth. No time to give to the things of God; to eternal truth; to the "lasting habitation": "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii. 20).

"I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them:" Some see in this excuse the type of avarice. Morbid contemplation of temporal possessions; busy contriving schemes for further gains, to the forgetting of God and the neglect of bounden duty to Him.

Is it not also a picture true to life of the manner in which many spend their Sundays, with horses and yachts, excursions, club meetings, and even sinful excesses?

Can those who thus spend the day set apart by divine ordinance for homage to God and virtuous rest, dare say, "I pray thee, hold me excused"?

"And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I can not

come." Does not even ask to be excused. This strikes the keynote of the greatest of social evils. Profanation of the sacrament of matrimony, and the consequent absence of religion, and waning of the faith in the family.

St. Paul says, "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (Ephes. v. 32). "Marriage honorable in all" (Heb. xiii. 4).

Our Lord honored it by His presence, and by His first miracle (John ii. 1-11). Proclaimed its sacred indissolubility: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. xix. 6).

What kind of marriage must that be which prevents man or woman from "rendering to God the things that are God's"? (Matt. xxii. 21).

"Go quickly therefore into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame."

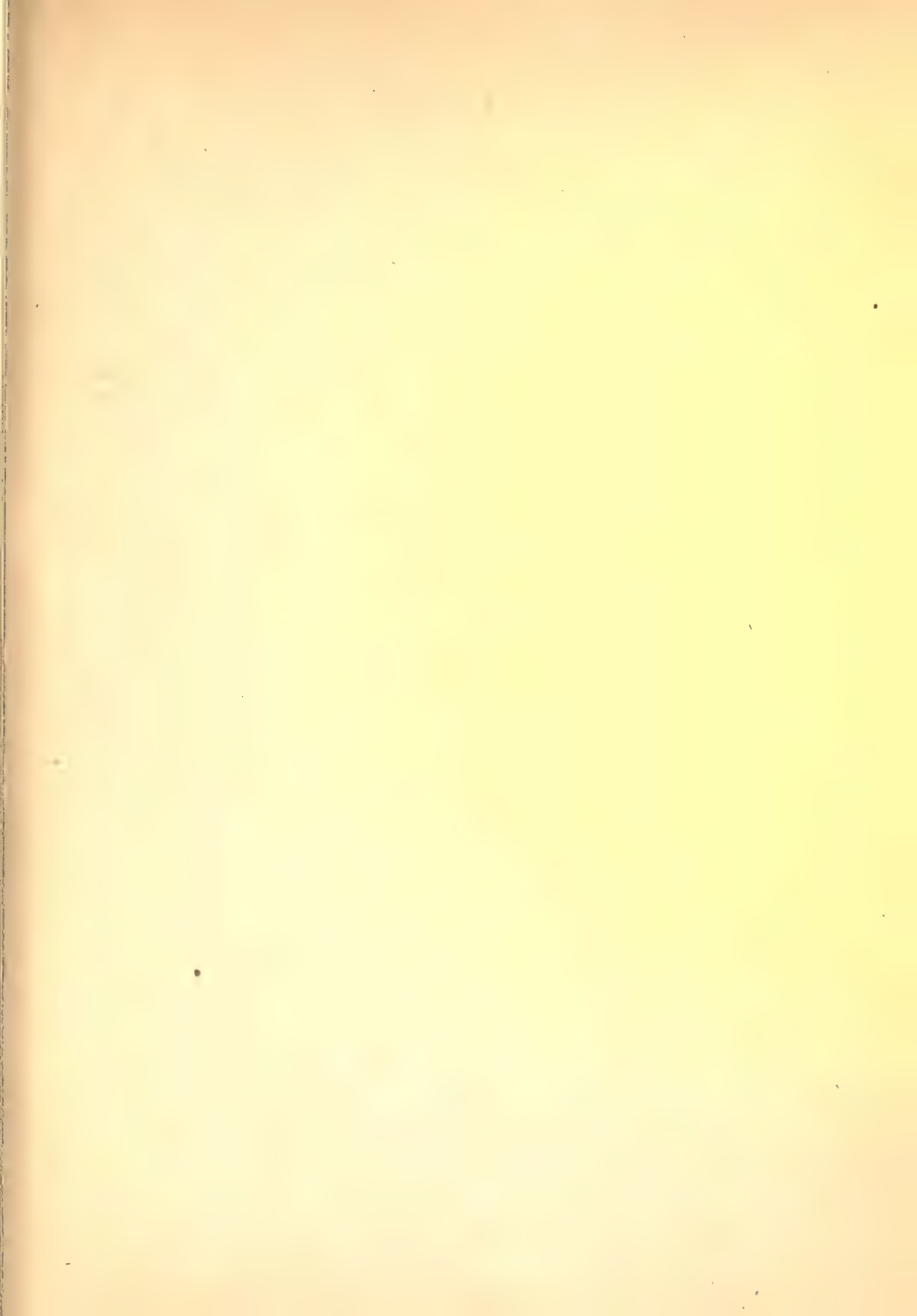
This order met with much more success.

Proof that human miseries bring men nearer and more easily to God than riches and so-called *prosperity*. "Amen I say to you, the rich man shall hardly (i. e., with difficulty) enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 23).

Proof also that God has special care of the less fortunate. Urges them to accept and profit by His graces. Their very misfortunes are the messengers sent to "bring them in."

Stronger yet are the efforts of God in regard to those poor creatures who have fallen into the depths of sin, and are hopelessly discouraged, who keep far away from all good influences.

"Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." So our blessed Lord tells us that the shepherd "will leave the ninety-nine (sheep) in the desert, and go after the one that is lost until he find it" (Luke xv. 4).





The Catholic Church may well be proud of her "reproach" that she is "the Church of the poor."

Conclusion.—Warning to those who allow worldly possessions or occupations, or social follies and vices, to keep them away from the service and the friendship of God.

Warning to the poor, and the unfortunate, and the outcasts, to appreciate God's special goodness and solicitude in their regard. They are not only "invited," but "urged" to come to His banquet.

If they fail, they, too, will fall under the condemnation: "I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper."

Exhortation to all to profit by the twofold lesson taught in this beautiful parable.

Let not the goods of this world—God's gifts—be used to offend Him; nor let the misfortunes of this life be an occasion of abandoning Him.

Fail not to accept, eagerly and gratefully, the invitation so often given. For "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke xiv. 15).

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

KINDNESS AND CHARITY TO SINNERS.

“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”—Luke xv. 2.

Exordium.—These words contain the reason why our Lord gave the parable of “The Lost Sheep.” “Publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him.” He received them with His usual kindness. Even sat down to eat with them. The Pharisees and the Scribes murmured.

Our Lord knowing their thoughts, answered them with three parables: The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Prodigal Son—simple, easily understood, and perfectly illustrative of the truths He wished to convey, viz.: 1. That man in sinning shows a lack of intelligence. 2. That God goes kindly after the sinner, and brings him back with joy. 3. That the conversion of the sinner should be a subject of great joy to his fellow men.

I. The stray sheep is the type of the sinner (cf. à Lapidè, Luke xv. 3). The sheep is not remarkable for intelligence or instinct. In respect of these qualities it is inferior to all other domestic animals, except, perhaps, the hog (a still more humiliating type).

If it keeps with the flock, it is simply because it is borne along in the midst of it. If turned loose in the field, it goes, with head to earth, unmindful and unconscious of everything save the gratification of its appetite. Follows the devious trail of the scattering herbs that allure it. Soon out of sight of the rest of the flock, which, meanwhile, has been led by the shepherd into “most fruitful pastures” (Ezech. xxxiv. 14).

Finding itself alone, it has not sense or intelligence enough to return. No beaten path. Can not follow scent or trail. Wanders aimlessly and hopelessly into the desert, with neither herbs nor water. Faint with hunger, thirst, and fatigue. At the mercy of wolves, etc.

So, the sinner follows the allurements of his evil, unrestrained passions, blindly, thoughtlessly, selfishly. All affection for parents and attachment to true friends forgotten. Heeds not the fact that he is cutting himself away from them—placing a vast desert waste between himself and them. Heeds not the fact that he is straying away from the happy influences of the days of his innocence—that he is feeding upon bitter, innutritious herbs. Even these soon fail him. The means of gratification are denied him. Those who allured him to sin, abandon him. He falls among heartless robbers and murderers—as the helpless sheep among wolves.

This comparison of sinners to stray sheep, not unfrequent in Holy Scripture: “I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost” (Ps. cxviii. 176; cf. Kenrick in loco). “All we, like sheep, have gone astray” (Isa. liii. 6). “You were as sheep going astray” (I. Pet. ii. 25; see also Ezech., whole of Ch. xxxiv.).

II. God, in the person of our divine Saviour, the Good Shepherd, leaves the ninety-nine just, and goes after the poor sinner—the stray sheep. “And when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders, rejoicing.” The shepherd is proverbially kind, gentle, and patient. He can not drive a poor, weak, starving sheep. It is unable to walk, or, at least, can travel very slowly; its strength often fails, and it falls helpless to the ground. If the shepherd would save it, he must *carry it*, or leave it to perish. This latter the Good Shepherd will not do.

Remark the good-heartedness of the shepherd, and, on the other hand, the harmlessness of the poor sheep. It is the most harmless of all animals, and the most liable to hurt itself.

Who can fail to see the application of the parable? Who so kind as God—as our blessed Saviour? Whom can the sinner injure but himself? [Of course, the sinner is terribly responsible for the scandal he may give (Matt. xviii. 6, 7), but those who yield to it are simply *other straying sheep*.]

The Good Shepherd goes after His stray sheep. The search may be long, weary, and dark. The search-light is often the fervent prayers of a sorrow-stricken mother, a poor, honest, God-fearing father, or a pious sister, immured, perhaps, within the convent's silent walls.

The sheep is found. The Good Shepherd lifts it gently and "lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing."

III. Not only does the shepherd himself rejoice, but he "calls together his friends and neighbors, saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the sheep that was lost."

Our Lord makes the application: "I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."

If joy in *heaven*, why not joy on *earth*? If there be sympathy in sickness, accident, imminent danger, or any other temporal or bodily misfortune, why not in the greatest of all misfortunes—*sin*?

Examples of human inconsistency: A child in a small town or village wanders off into the neighboring fields or forest. The first search and inquiry proving fruitless, the entire community is aroused. All things else left and forgotten, to join in the search. The child found and restored to its parents amidst the wildest joy and excitement. Before the accident it had passed utterly unnoticed among hundreds of other children. Now it is the hero of the hour—simply on account of its misfortune—the result of its lack of sense!

How many shiftless, worthless, drunken, dissolute persons are



passed daily by; allowed to continue in their evil ways; no effort of any kind whatever made to reclaim them. Let one of them meet with an accident, let his life be in danger, even though it be through his own drunken folly, what heroic efforts are made to save him. How often valuable lives are risked, and sometimes lost, in such attempts. What sighs of relief and shouts of joy go up from those who witness the rescue.

Consoling evidence of the innate kindness of the human heart. Let this kindness be guided to the accomplishment of the greater good—according to Gospel maxims—the teachings of our Lord.

Conclusion.—The lesson of the parable, plain and forcible: Our Lord loved sinners, and wishes us to have charity in our hearts for them. He labored to save them—wishes us to do the same, in so far as it may be in our power. He rejoices in their conversion, and wishes us to rejoice with Him.

Many ways of aiding in the conversion of sinners: Charitableness in speech; not needlessly exposing their faults; nor condemning them with Pharisaical severity. Kindness toward them, and sincere sorrow for their misfortune—which is all the greater in proportion as their faults are viler and more exasperating. Give them a helping hand—by material aid when necessary—but always by kindly admonition, and the example of a consistent, charitable, irreproachable Christian life. Take an earnest part in this good work, and you may often hear the Good Shepherd saying to you: “Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep which was lost.”

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

MAN'S SUCCESS DEPENDENT UPON GOD'S WILL.

"Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing; but at thy word I will let down the net."—Luke v. 5.

Exordium.—There is no doubt that this miracle has reference to the call of the apostles, and to the great work they were to do as "fishers of men"—rescuing souls from the abyss of sin.

No doubt either, that Peter was unaware of what was about to happen. Evidently did not expect it.

Was plying his ordinary avocation. Was satisfied with ordinary success. Not discouraged by occasional failure.

In his ready obedience to our Lord's command he has left a lesson for all time, a lesson worthy of the Prince of the Apostles—of the Father of the Faithful.

I. Man can not have success without the blessing of God. Strive as he may, he labors in the dark, and accomplishes nothing of real value.

Many deceive themselves. They imagine that they can, and do, achieve success independently of God. That they, by their intelligence and energy (and their superiority to the great mass of their fellow men) make the world subservient to them, and draw unto themselves all that man can desire.

Remark that those who think and act thus, look not beyond the present life. Take no thought for the future. Make no provision for it. What is the utmost limit of their success? The amassing of riches; the acquiring of honors; living in ease and luxury. All

these things do not ensure contentment, domestic peace, and happiness; do not prevent the breaking, in diverse ways, of the tenderest family ties; do not ensure the blessing of health, so absolutely essential to the enjoyment of such possessions.

Many a multi-millionaire would give nine-tenths, and more, of all his riches for the health of the humble laborer, and for the happiness of the poor man's home.

Whatever the extent or degree of their success, it is not permanent. All may end in a moment, by accident or death. "Man is like to vanity: his days pass away like a shadow" (Ps. cxliii. 4).

Let them live and get all they possibly can out of the world, and their end is inevitably bitterness and disappointment.

None may hope for, none would desire more than Solomon had. "I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem. And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not: and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared. . . . And when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labors wherein I had labored in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun" (Eccles. ii. 9-11).

II. Man is not entitled to any success in the world—to any share in its goods, except in so far as he complies with the will of God.

Men do not dare seize upon that which clearly belongs to their fellow men. Neither can they live among their fellow men without complying with all just and reasonable laws—from some of which there is no appeal.

Neither can they seize upon the things that are God's and ignore *His laws*.

All things belong absolutely to God. "The earth is the Lord's,

and the fulness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell in it" (Ps. xxiii. 1). Many seem to forget this. Seem to think that life is a scramble. That each one is absolute master of all he can get hold of; responsible to neither man nor God for the use he makes of what he gets. The Gospel tells us of a certain man who had great riches and enjoyed them for a time, but paid a terrible penalty afterward (Luke xvi. 19). No charge made against him—except that he forgot to see that the poor were fed at his gate. Probably forgot also that "the earth is the Lord's."

God allows many to achieve this apparent success. Allows them to seize upon His goods. He knows their career will be brief—like the insects of a season—and His goods will remain for others to use, or abuse: "The senseless and the fool shall perish together; they shall leave their riches to strangers; and their sepulchres shall be their houses forever" (Ps. xlviii. 11, 12).

Many have real success and prosperity. They recognize the sovereign dominion of God, acknowledge themselves to be merely His stewards—and strive to be faithful ones.

Many more would be successful if they would imitate St. Peter. Not discouraged by past failures. Always ready to comply with the will of God—to let down the net at His bidding.

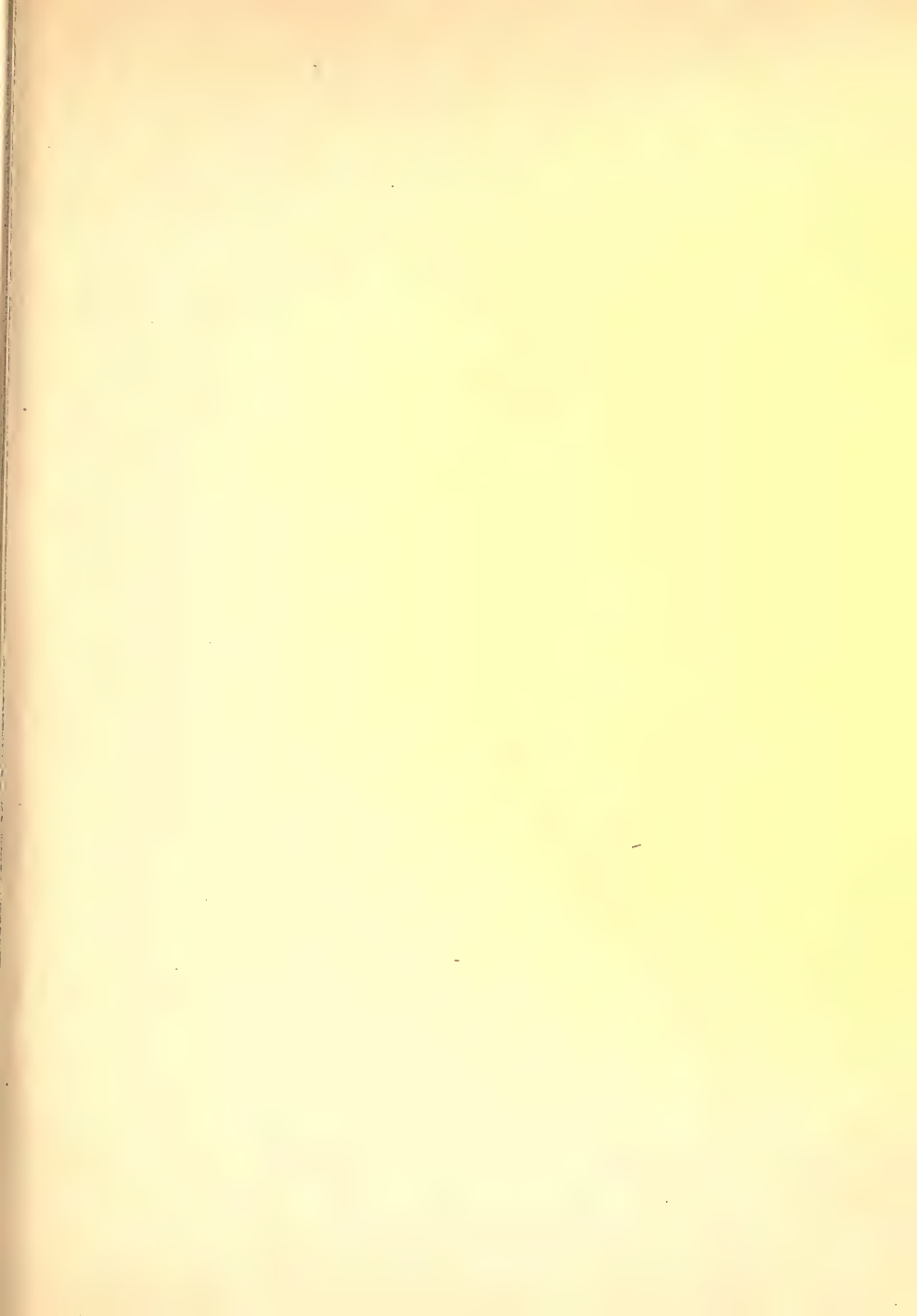
III. Success should always be a reminder of the goodness of God, and of our own unworthiness.

This was the effect upon Peter—his first and all-absorbing thought. "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man."

Admirable sincerity and humility!

Contrary effect upon many: Self-conceit, arrogance, contempt of others, forgetfulness of God, and ingratitude to Him. Sometimes even loss of faith; frequently abandonment of the practice of it.

Perhaps one of the greatest curses of riches—the root of all others





—is that men do not realize how unworthy they are of the blessings and comforts they enjoy.

Their success *separates them* from God. Peter's *drew him nearer* to his divine Master.

Conclusion.—Warning to those who acknowledge not the dominion of God, and who abuse His gifts.

Encouragement to those who realize their responsibility and strive to be “faithful stewards.”

Encouragement also to those who may be discouraged in their honest labors.

Exhortation to all to be humbly grateful for blessings received. To be ready at all times to do the holy will of God—to lend a helping hand to every good work, notwithstanding previous failures, or slight prospect of success. Say as Peter did, and with his faith, “Lord, at thy word I will let down the net.”

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CHRISTIAN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“I tell you that unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. v. 20.

Exordium.—The Scribes and Pharisees claimed, and were generally admitted, to be a very respectable class among the Jewish people. Were teachers of the law, and posed as exemplars in the observance of it. Yet they had been publicly and severely rebuked by St. John the Baptist in the very beginning of his ministry (Matt. iii. 7). Our Lord frequently rebuked them, and exposed their faults and insincerity. On one occasion He used almost the very words of His holy Precursor: “You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?” (Matt. xxiii. 33).

To-day's Gospel is a portion of the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes had just been proclaimed, and doubtless sounded strange to many who heard them. Probably seemed to be in contradiction with the law, as taught by the Scribes and Pharisees; and these latter were only too ready to take advantage of this apparent contradiction.

Our Lord forestalls them: “Do not think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. v. 17).

He had fulfilled it in His own life. He was “the way, the truth, and the life” (John xiv. 6). He had come to explain the full meaning of the law, and to announce to mankind that true justice, or righteousness, can only be attained by the perfect observance of the

law, even in its smallest details, and according to its spirit: "Amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. v. 18).

He was, therefore, obliged to condemn the pretended "justice" of the Scribes and Pharisees.

I. The Scribes and Pharisees did not fulfil the law themselves. They preached it to others, but did not practise it: "They say, and do not. They bind heavy burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move them. . . . You shut the kingdom of heaven against men," says our Lord, addressing them directly; "for you yourselves do not enter in; and those who are going in, you suffer not to enter" (Matt. xxiii. 3, 4, 13). They were vain and haughty: "All their works they do, to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge their fringes. They love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues, and salutations in the market-place" (Matt. xxiii. 5-7).

They were insincere: "Wo to you Scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites*; because you make clean the outside of the cup, and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Outwardly, indeed, you appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. xxiii. 25, 28).

No wonder the severe denunciation followed: "You serpents, generation of vipers," etc.

II. They did not teach the law correctly. Insisted on *the letter*; ignored *the spirit*. Made justice, or holiness, consist in exterior observances—washing of hands, etc. (Matt. xv. 1-20). Neglected "the weightier things of the law: judgment, and mercy, and faith" (Matt. xxiii. 23).

Hence our Lord again denounces them: "Blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matt. xxiii. 24).

The true meaning and extent of the law explained by our Lord: Not only is *murder* sinful, but also *anger*, *hatred*; abusive, contemptuous, or scurrilous language; unnecessary oaths; profanity. Revenge forbidden. Forgiveness of injuries, and even love of enemies, enjoined.

Moreover, the law is violated not merely by *act*, but by *thought* and *desire* as well. Hence the occasions of sin must be avoided at all cost (Matt. v. 21-48. Cf. Kenrick, in Matt. v.).

Such the observance of the law prescribed by our Lord, as the condition of "entering the kingdom of heaven." Such the standard of *Christian righteousness*.

III. Application of the lesson: We readily see the errors of the Scribes and Pharisees. We condemn them, and profess sympathy with our Lord. May be well to recall His words to the "great multitude of people, and the women, who bewailed him" on His way to Calvary: "Weep not over me; but weep *for yourselves*, and for your children" (Luke xxiii. 28).

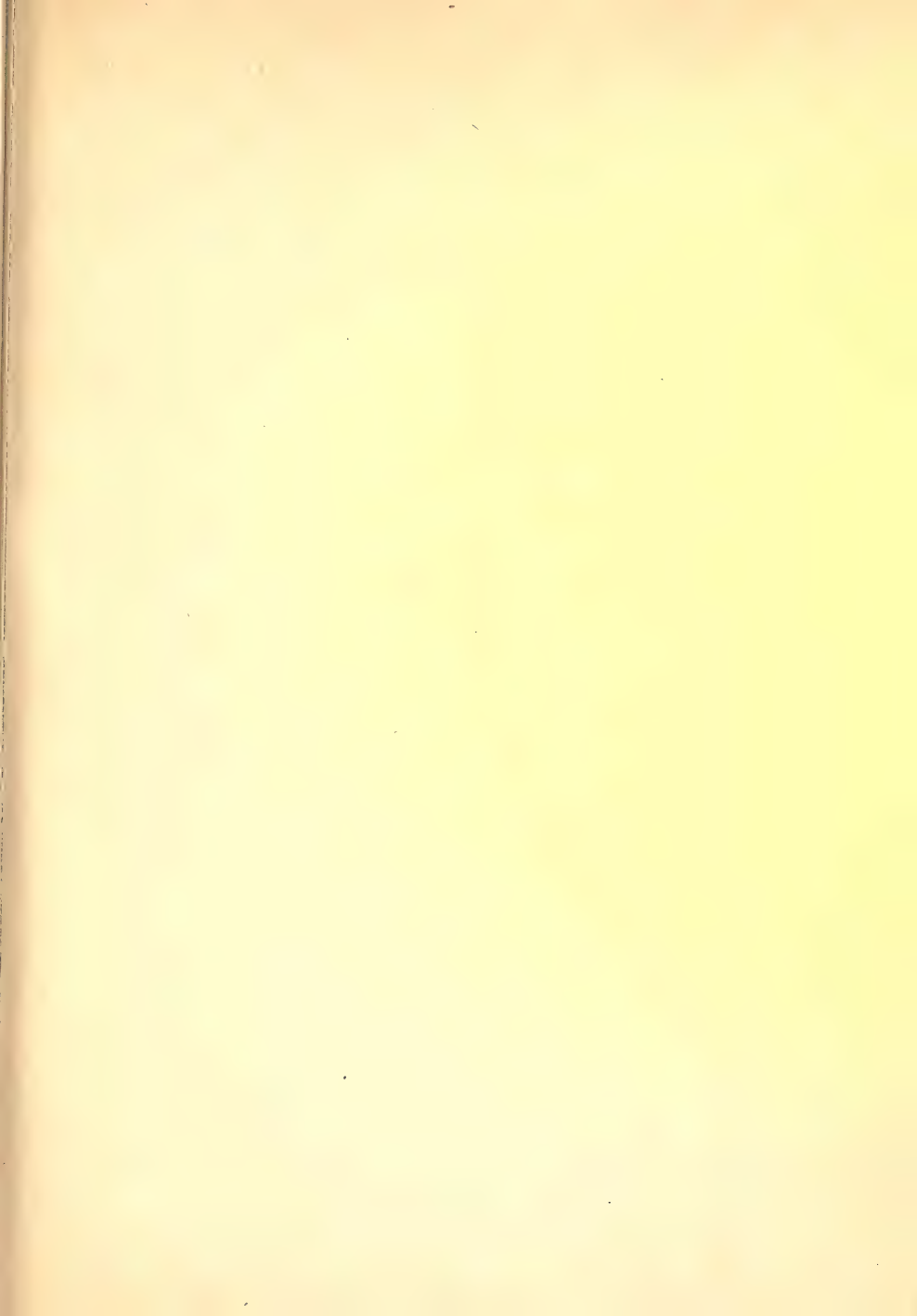
Before condemning the Jews, we should examine ourselves. Our Lord's words intended for all time. He knew that in all ages men would be prone to the faults which He denounced in the Pharisees: Preaching and not practising. Requiring more of others than they would do themselves. Seeing the mote in their brother's eye, but not the beam in their own (Matt. vii. 5).

Vanity; human respect, haughtiness: Doing their good works, to be seen by men. Loving places of honor and distinction.

Inconsistency: "Straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel."

Insincerity: "Making clean the outside of the cup." Selfishness; envy; resentment. Giving evil example, and thus becoming false teachers and blind guides.

Exhortation.—Sincere and honest examination, to see whether



we are striving to live according to our Lord's standard of "justice," or righteousness.

Remember His warnings: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: nor hidden that shall not be made known" (Luke xii. 1, 2).

"I tell you that unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

"Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48).

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR ALL MANKIND.

“I have compassion on the multitude.”—Mark viii. 2.

Exordium.—To-day's Gospel contains the account of the second miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes by our Lord.

He had performed a similar miracle a few months before. Both show forth His divine power. Both call attention in a striking manner to the daily Providence of God in supplying the wants of man from the fruits and riches of the earth. Both were doubtless intended to prepare the minds of men for belief in the great and perpetual mystery of the Last Supper.*

But special circumstances also point to another lesson: Those who were fed by our Lord by the first miracle, at Bethsaida, were chiefly, if not all, Jews. Many of them from Capharnaum and the surrounding country (Matt. xiv. 13). Others from parts far and near, on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover (Fouard, I., 336-7).

The second miracle, on the contrary, was performed in the midst of a grossly ignorant, heathen population, east of the Sea of Galilee. Very few Jews present (Edersheim, *Life of Christ*, II., 63-65. Fouard, II., 12-15). The same people had, not long before, “besought him that he would depart from their coasts” (Matt. viii. 28-34).

Remark also that on both occasions our Lord first instructed those

* For a Dogmatic Sermon on the Real Presence, it would, of course, be better to study the two miracles in connection with our Lord's discourse on “The Bread of Life” (John vi.), as explained by Cardinal Wiseman (*LECTURES ON THE BLESSED EUCHARIST*).

who came to Him, and healed them of their infirmities, and then supplied their wants (Luke ix. 11; Matt. xv. 30, 31).

To-day's lesson:

I. The love and bounty of our Lord extend to all mankind, without exception: To Gentile as well as to Jew. To those in the darkness of error, as well as to those of the household of the Faith. To sinners as well as to the just. To the roving prodigal as well as to the faithful son that remains always with Him (Luke xv.).

This is only the fulfilment of promises often made: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Matt. vii. 7). "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28). "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger: and he that believeth in me shall never thirst. . . . And this is the will of my Father that sent me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John vi. 35, 40). Hence the apostle may truly say, "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men" (Titus ii. 11).

II. The goodness of our Lord extends indeed to all—even to the penitent thief on the cross; and He leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the fold, to go in search of the one that is astray. But these latter are exceptional cases. Proofs of His inexhaustible love.

The general rule is, that those who wish to profit by His bountiful kindness must seek Him: "Seek the Lord while he may be found: call upon him while he is near" (Isa. lv. 6). "Seek ye the Lord, and live" (Amos v. 6). "*Ask*, and it shall be given you: *seek*, and you shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened to you," says our Blessed Lord Himself (Matt. vii. 7).

St. Ambrose (Homily, III., Noct.) bids us remark that our Lord

did not work this miracle for those who remained in idle luxury in the cities, or were engaged in seeking and enjoying worldly dignities. Nor for those who had no relish for better things. But for those who sought Him in the desert. Who preferred what our Lord could give them to all things else.

To these earnest, honest souls, He first spoke of the kingdom of heaven. Next He cured them of their various maladies (Matt. xv. 30), and elicited from them praise and thanksgiving to God (Matt. xv. 31). Lastly, He gave them the miraculous food.

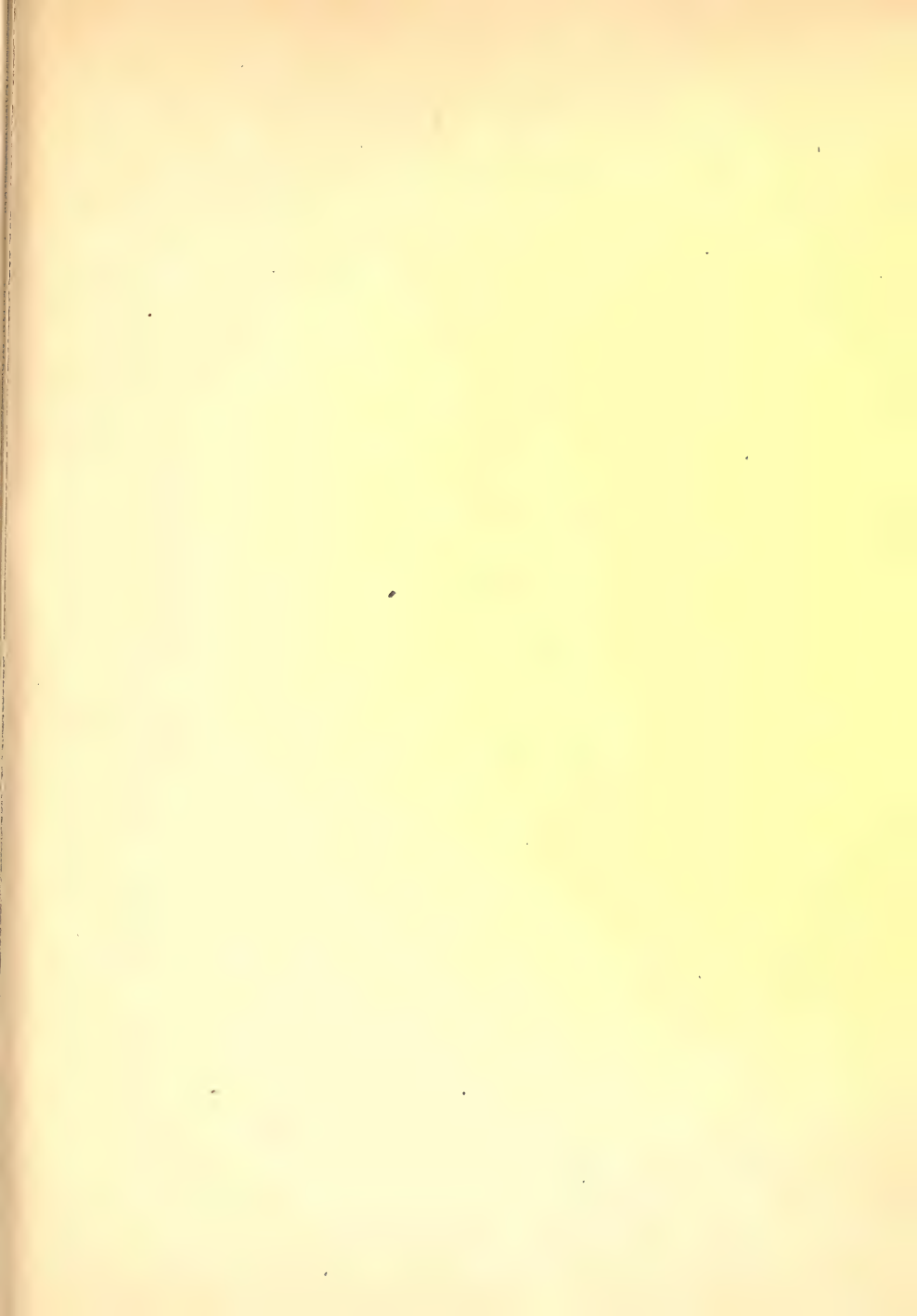
"Thus," continues the Holy Doctor, "no one receives the food of Christ until after he has been healed. If lame, he must first receive the strength to walk. If blind, he can not enter the house of God until he has recovered his sight."

So in the spiritual order: There must be remission of sin before there can be any participation in the Heavenly Banquet: before the soul can be nourished with the grace of God.

III. Warning to those who, like the Jews of old, wilfully reject our Lord's benefits, and contradict His teachings: "I go, and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin. Whither I go, you can not come. . . . You are of this world. I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you, that you shall die in your sins. For if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sin" (John viii. 21-24).

Encouragement to those who, through weakness or negligence, have strayed afar. They should not be afraid to return. Our Lord makes special mention of them: "If I shall send them away fasting to their homes, they will faint in the way; for some of them *have come from afar*" (Mark viii. 3). Example of the Prodigal Son.

Exhortation.—To all: "Seek the Lord while He may be found: call upon Him while He is near."





Heed His kind and loving invitation. "There is no respect of persons with him" (Eph. vi. 9). He says without restriction, "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you;" for now, as always, "I have compassion on the multitude."

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FALSE TEACHERS.

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”—Matt. vii. 15.

Exordium.—Various meanings of the word “Prophet” in Holy Scripture: One who foretells future events; a holy man, or “Man of God” (Cf. IV. Kings, iv. 7, 9). A worker of miracles; a singer or chanter (I. Kings, x. 5; Cf. Maclear, O. T. History, 276; “Schools of the Prophets”; Gigot, Jewish History, 276). Lastly, and perhaps more frequently, it means simply a teacher (Cf. à Lapidè in loco). Evidently employed in this sense in to-day’s Gospel (Kenrick, in loco). A teacher naturally becomes a leader. Perhaps it is also true to say that every leader, every person of influence, becomes, in some sort, a teacher. If this be admitted, then there are very many false teachers. Our Lord, by the similitude of the tree, enables us to distinguish two classes very clearly: Those who seem to be good and those who are notoriously bad. When a tree appears to be good, we have to wait for and examine its fruit before we can know whether it really is good or bad. When we know that a tree is bad, we are sure what its fruit will be.

I. False teachers who seem to resemble the good tree.⁹ Three kinds: (a) Those who profess to teach others and are *sincere*, but they have no mission, and are in error themselves. In spite of their sincerity, “they are blind leaders of the blind,” and our Lord tells us what will become of both the leaders and the led (Matt. xv. 14). “By their fruits you shall know them.” Confusion and contradiction in doctrine; rejection of the authority transmitted by our Lord

to His apostles and their successors ; jarring sects, and hopeless disunion. The sheep of Christ, instead of being gathered into "one fold under one Shepherd" (John x. 16), are scattered in every direction—led into dry and barren pastures by shepherds whose voice they do not know.

(b) Pharisaical teachers : *Insincere* ; preach what they do not practice ; often what they know to be but lies and calumnies. Denounced by our Lord in the severest terms ; thieves and robbers, who enter not by the door. Hirelings, who leave the sheep to be caught and scattered by the wolf (John x. 1, 12). "You go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte ; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell, twofold worse than yourselves. . . . Wo to you Scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites* ! . . . Outwardly indeed you appear to men just ; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. xxiii. 15, 27, 28).

(c) Those who disclaim the office of teacher or preacher, but are "a law unto themselves." Deny the fact of Divine Revelation. Reject, of course, the teaching authority of the Church. Claim to follow a higher and nobler code of morality than that of any narrow creed. Their opinions spread broadcast by social intercourse, public position, writings, etc. Histories, magazine articles, and so-called *philosophical novels* teem with them. "Raging waters of the sea, foaming out their own confusion ; wandering stars, to whom the storm of darkness is reserved forever."

II. There is a class of false teachers, or leaders, who are evidently bad. Like unto the bad tree—which our Lord tells us "can not bring forth good fruit." Persons who openly set at naught the commandments of God ; are known to be grasping, heartless, dishonest, unprincipled in business matters. Lead immoral lives without shame or concealment. Wallow in luxury and offend against the most

sacred laws of decency. Votaries of *the world*, in the worst possible sense of the term: "Let us enjoy the good things that are present," they say. "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments. Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered: let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury. Let us oppress the poor, just man, and spare not the widow, nor honor the ancient gray hairs of the aged. But let our strength be the law of justice" (Wis. ii. 6-11). "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die" (Is. xxii. 13).

Sad, but undeniable fact, that these teachers, or leaders, have many followers. "They that are such, serve not Christ, but their own belly (gross passions), and by pleasing speeches, seduce the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. xvi. 18). "Wo to you that call evil good, and good evil" (Is. v. 20). "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they act deceitfully: the poison of asps is under their lips" (Ps. xiii. 3).

III. Our Lord has not only warned us against *false teachers*. He has left us *true ones*—safe guides. The commission given to the apostles: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations," etc. (Matt. xxviii. 19). His sending the Holy Ghost to abide with them forever, and to teach them all truth (John xiv. 16, 26). His promise to remain with them Himself, "even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). Clothing them with His own divine power and authority: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me" (Luke x. 16).

He may therefore say, as He has said by the mouth of the prophet: "Judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Is. v. 3, 4).

Conclusion.—Thanks to our Blessed Lord for the solemn warning. Earnest effort to realize the manifold dangers by which we are sur-





rounded, from false teaching, in all its varied forms. Profound gratitude for having been placed, without any merit on our part, within the one true fold. Docile and grateful reverence for the teachings of the Church. Watchful care to avoid contamination and weakening of faith by indiscriminate or injudicious reading, or by the ungodliness of the world. "Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (Coloss. ii. 8).

Remember the warning: "Beware of false prophets. By their fruits you shall know them. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire."

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE RIGHT USE OF THE GOODS OF THIS WORLD.

"Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity."—Luke xvi. 9.

Exordium.—This parable, simple, instructive, practical. Yet some have found a difficulty and a stumbling block in the words, "And the Lord commended the unjust steward"—as though this were a warrant or justification for the dishonesty of agents or servants toward those who trust or employ them. Such a meaning could never be attributed to our Lord. Moreover, the difficulty is unreasonable. It is perfectly clear that the steward was praised *not because he was unjust*, but because he showed a certain *prudence in trying to prepare for the future*.

The rich man and the steward represent God and man, respectively. The parable shows beautifully their mutual relationship: God is the sole owner of all things. Man is only His agent, and is liable to be called to account at any moment. If he is wise he will make provision for himself against the day of reckoning.

I. All men are nothing more than stewards of Almighty God. They have absolutely nothing of their own. Riches, health, talents, *reason itself*, are all gifts held in trust from Him. Riches may pass out of his hands; health may fail; reason may forsake him; misfortunes, afflictions, persecutions, calumnies may destroy all comfort and happiness. All these things come to pass with the permission of God. He alone can avert them. He alone can restore all. Example of holy Job.

Man thinks he has absolute control of his riches, even though he

knows he must die, and leave all behind him; and though he may die at any moment, still he imagines that he asserts his ownership by naming his heirs. In reality God removes him from his stewardship and appoints his successors, whose term of office is also absolutely dependent upon the Divine Will. Uncertainty of man's tenure proved in numberless ways: May lose all that he has in a day, or may himself be snatched away from his fancied possessions.

No time to name his heir, or if named, not sure that he will receive the inheritance; or if he receives it, may squander or ill use it: "Man passeth as an image: he storeth, and he knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things" (Ps. xxxviii. 7). "This night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii. 20). Often the sole and cherished heir dies first: "I found also another vanity under the sun: There is but one, and he hath not a second: no child, no brother; and yet he ceaseth not to labor; neither are his eyes satisfied with riches; neither doth he reflect, saying: For whom do I labor, and defraud my soul of good things?" (Eccles. iv. 7, 8). "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!" (Ecclus. xli. 1).

II. All men are stewards; but few are *just stewards*. Fewer still "make friends unto themselves of the mammon of iniquity"; so that when they fail—when their stewardship is ended—they may be "received into everlasting habitations." Our Lord clearly implies this: "Amen, I say to you, the rich man (*the steward*) shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 23). He is even more emphatic: "Again I say to you: it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 24), i. e., It is impossible, without the assistance of God's grace. So explained by our Lord Himself: "With

man this is impossible: but with God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 26). Impossible, therefore, to make a good use of riches, unless they be used and employed in strict accordance with the will of God. "The Lord hath made all things for himself" (Prov. xvi. 4). "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. xxiii. 1).

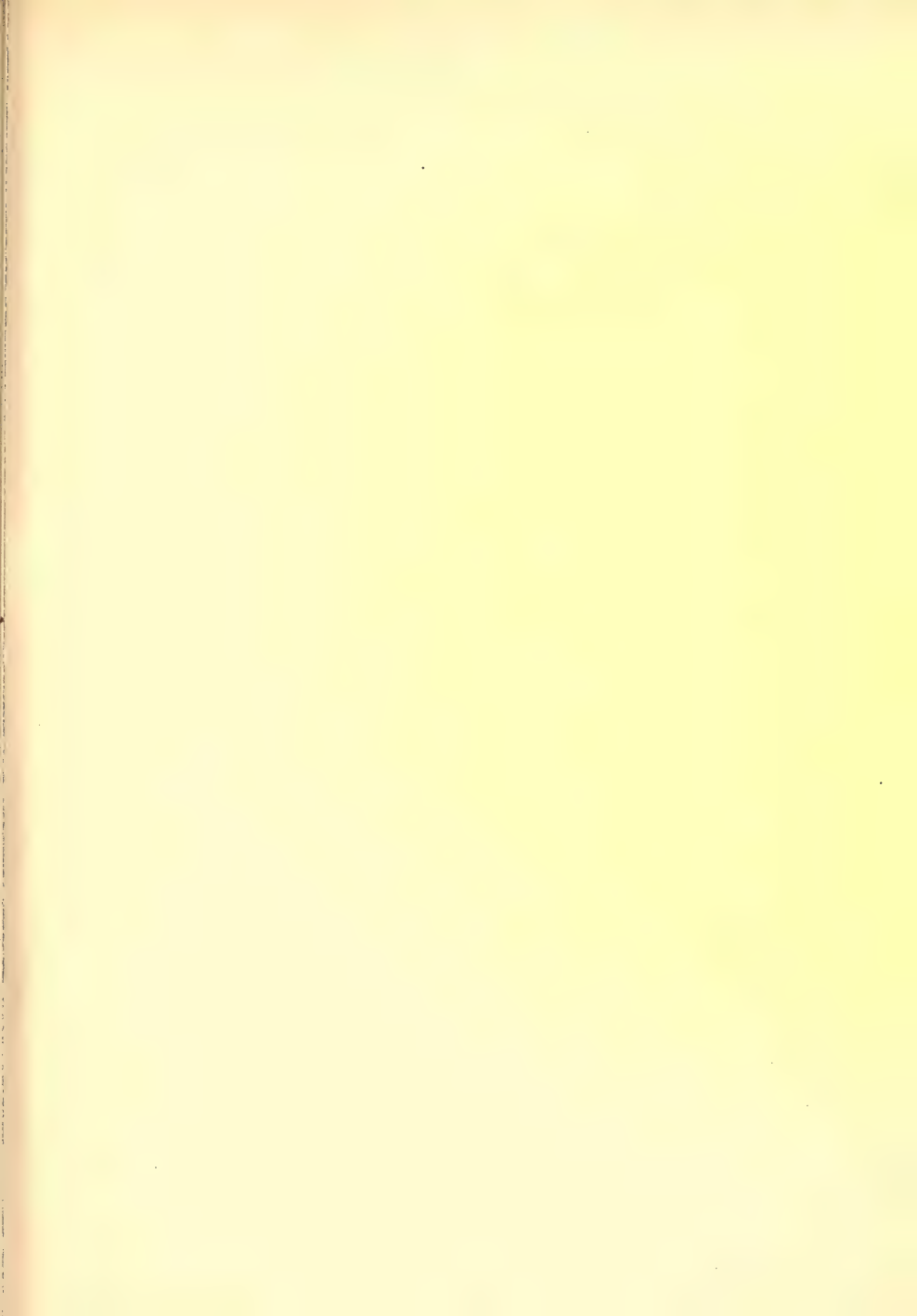
The fault of the unjust steward was that "He had *wasted* his goods." All is wasted that does not tend to the glory of God, by the uplifting of man. Wanton luxury and extravagance uplifts neither the steward nor his fellow men. "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen; and feasted sumptuously every day"; and when he died, "he was buried in hell" (Luke xvi. 19, 22).

Grand schemes of material improvement—parks, monuments, palatial residences and public buildings; public libraries (empoisoned with error, corruption, and blasphemy) do not uplift man. Mere pagan "civilization" generates pagans.

Godless education may be conducive to material progress; but those who contribute to it are, and those who profit by it become, "unjust stewards."

III. When the unjust steward realized his fault, and the consequences of it, his first thought was to save himself by kindness and liberality to his fellow-men. Acted far more wisely than the servant who throttled his fellow-servant "and cast him into prison, till he paid the debt" (Matt. xviii. 23-35). Came nearer to our Lord's own injunction: "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke vi. 37, 38).

Conclusion.—The responsibilities of those entrusted with the goods





of this world undeniably great. But their opportunities for doing are proportionate to the extent of their stewardship. Their reward proportionate to their fidelity. God does not wish riches to be a curse. It is only the blindness and folly of man that makes them so.

Exhortation.—Be faithful stewards: "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and give Him of the first of all thy fruits: and thy barns shall be filled with abundance" (Prov. iii. 9).

"When thou makest a feast, call the poor and the lame and the blind. And thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to recompense thee: for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv. 13, 14). "He that giveth to the poor shall not want: he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence" (Prov. xxviii. 27).

"According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little" (Tob. iv. 8, 9). "Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish; and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money" (Ecclus. xxxi. 8).

All this is taught in the parable, by our Lord Himself: "And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when it shall fail (i. e., when your stewardship shall be ended) they may receive you into everlasting dwellings."

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CHRIST WEeping OVER JERUSALEM.

"If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes."—Luke xix. 42.

Exordium.—Remarkable circumstances in which these words were spoken; not on any of the many occasions when the Jews were contradicting and reviling our Lord, or seeking to kill Him. On the contrary, it was when the city was rising up to do Him honor (cf. Maldonatus in loco). At the very moment when the ancient prophecy was being fulfilled in His person: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour: he is poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zach. ix. 9).

"And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way, and others cut down boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. xxi. 8, 9). And still Jesus wept!

I. Mere passing enthusiasm—fickle sentiment—is neither honor to God nor justification to man. Vain display, fashionable gatherings, ostentatious liberality, is not religion. Neither sacrifice of goods, nor erection of magnificent temples of worship, nor monumental institutions for the relief of the helpless and destitute, will avail anything, unless those who do these things observe faithfully the law of God, and "adore him in spirit and truth" (John iv. 24). "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit, a contrite and humbled heart"

(Ps. 1. 19). "Religion pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and the widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world" (James i. 27).

Our Lord passes silently and in sorrow through the shouting throng. Makes His way to His Father's house. Finds little there to console Him. Retires unheeded to the little hamlet beyond the city walls to meditate upon His abiding grief and His impending sufferings.

The Sabbath is over; the pageant has vanished, and little honor has been paid to God. The darkness of night settles over the seething iniquities of the doomed city.

II. It was over this wickedness and debauchery that Jesus wept. Over the obstinacy of the Jews in rejecting Him. Over the vengeance of His Father, that must come upon them. Over their blindness, their ignorance, their fatal disregard of the future (cf. à Lapidé in loco). "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round on every side. And beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee: and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."

Prophecy literally fulfilled ere that generation passed away. Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A. D. 70 (cf. Josephus, *Jewish War*, Bk. VI., Ch. IX., 3).

III. The fate of Jerusalem has been the fate of many a wicked city since. The fate of the sinful Jews, the inevitable fate of all those who set God's laws at defiance: "All they that forsake thee shall be confounded: they that depart from thee, shall be written in the

earth: because they have forsaken the Lord, the vein of living waters" (Jer. xvii. 13).

Few cities, if any, in world to-day over which our Lord would not have reason to weep as bitterly as He wept over Jerusalem.

The curse of Jerusalem may not always, nor even frequently, fall upon *whole cities*. It is constantly falling upon *individuals*, and upon *families*.

Prosperity and happiness vanish; homes made desolate, or lost entirely; destitution and disgrace—all this the frequent result of the sins of parents and the neglect and ruin of children. Because they did not "know the things that were to their peace."

Herein is found the root of all, or nearly all, the moral evil in the world: Irreligion in the family breeds social rottenness and decay.

It is the smoldering ember in the basement that destroys the whole edifice. The fatal germ that spreads the exterminating pestilence of vice.

Conclusion.—Learn the twofold lesson contained in to-day's Gospel: Avoid sham religion; hollow conventionalities; vain display; insincere professions—all which are an abomination in the sight of God. "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore, when thou dost an alms deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Amen, I say to you, they have their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, will repay thee" (Matt. vi. 1-4).

Strive by good works to avoid the wrath to come. No expression of love, sympathy, or devotion will avail, unless we be "Innocent in





hands and clean of heart " (Ps. xxiii. 4). " Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children " (Luke xxiii. 28). " Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven " (Matt. vii. 21).

Pray to be freed from the blindness of worldlings and sinners, who know not " the things that are to their peace: because they are hidden from their eyes."

Suppliant petition of the blind man: " Lord, that I may see!" (Luke xviii. 41).

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

PRIDE AND HUMILITY.

"Every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted."—Luke xviii. 14.

Exordium.—Every parable spoken by our Lord contains a lesson, and, needless to say, an important one. This is especially true of the lesson contained in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The contrary effects of pride and humility are clearly set forth. There seems, however, to be a rather widespread and erroneous impression in regard to the gravity of the sin of pride and the nature of the virtue of humility. This subject must occupy our attention to-day, as the parable will aid us to understand it.

I. Pride is given as the first of the seven capital or deadly sins (cf. Gaume*, II. 753). Defined: "An inordinate esteem of oneself, which makes a person prefer himself to others, and instead of referring all that he is and all that he has to God, refers all to himself" (ibid.).

According to St. Thomas, "Pride is a sin by which man, going against right reason, tries to surpass or rise above the true measure of what he is" (2. 2. q. 162, 1). According to St. Isidore (quoted by St. Thomas, ibid.), "Man is called proud because he wishes to appear to be above (super) what he really is." Evident folly.

St. Thomas goes much further and says: "Pride, by which, more than by anything else, we are turned away from God, is the first and the beginning of all sins" (ibid., Art. VII.). St. Gregory (apud

* Catechism of Perseverance.

à Lapide in Luc. xviii. 11) points out four evil dispositions in the sin of pride: 1. It makes a person think that whatever good there is in him is from himself, and not from God. 2. Makes him attribute the possession of it to his own merits or ability. 3. Makes him think he has something which he really has not. 4. Finally causes him to despise and revile others, hoping thus to render his own superiority more evident.

Briefly, pride is absolute rebellion against God.

Humility, on the contrary, is just and reasonable subjection to God. Is not (as falsely supposed) a feigned or forced depreciation of oneself below one's real merits.

Humility is not *weakness*. On the contrary. "It is a virtue by which the mind is *strengthened* so as not to exalt itself above what it really is" (St. Thomas, 2. 2. q. 161, 1).

Humility recognizes that all good gifts and qualities are from God alone. It discerns accurately between qualities and defects.

The humble person, being strictly just—"simple and upright and fearing God, and avoiding evil" (Job i. 8)—looks for his own defects and his neighbor's good qualities. Discovering the former, he abases himself before God. Recognizing the latter, he gives glory to God as their author and giver, and respects and honors his neighbor for being endowed with them. Humility has no conception of envy. Can see no cause for it. Humility fosters charity.

No more noble trait in man than to acknowledge and respect good qualities and talents in his fellow man.

II. All this in perfect harmony with the lesson contained in the parable: "Two men went up into the temple to pray" (Luke xviii. 10). Our Lord does not say that the Pharisee prayed "to God," but that he prayed (soliloquized) "with himself." St. Augustine (cf. Maldonatus in loco) says, "He went up to pray, but instead of

praying to God, he praised himself, and insulted the poor Publican, who was really engaged in prayer."

The Pharisee recounted only his own good deeds—none of his faults. Mentioned no good deeds of his neighbor—only attributed to him all manner of sins, and crimes, even the most heinous.

Denounces not only a *few*, or *many*, but *all*. He was not "as the rest of men" (Luke xviii. 11). He alone was just. Even pointed the finger of scorn at his fellow worshiper.

The humble Publican resents not the insult. Speaks not of the evident faults of his neighbor, nor of his own good deeds.

Bows down in lowly reverence, confessing his sins, and imploring pardon: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke xviii. 13). Our Lord tells us the different effects of these two kinds of prayer.

III. The verdict of Holy Writ on pride and humility. "The praise of the wicked is short. If his pride mount up even to heaven, and his head touch the clouds, in the end he shall be destroyed like a dunghill" (Job xx. 5-7). "I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by, and lo, he was not: and sought him, and his place was not found" (Ps. xxxvi. 35, 36). "Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord. Pride goeth before destruction; and the spirit is lifted up before a fall" (Prov. xvi. 5, 18). "It is better to be humbled with the meek than to divide spoils with the proud" (ibid. v. 19; cf. Kenrick in loco). "The beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God: because his heart is departed from him that made him: for pride is the beginning of all sin" (Ecclus. x. 14, 15).

Our Lord Himself has said, "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*" (the humble) (Matt. v. 3). "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (ibid. xi. 29). "Whosoever shall humble





himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven " (ibid. xviii. 4).

Examples: The centurion: " Lord, I am not worthy " etc. (Matt. viii. 8). The prodigal: " I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants " (Luke xv. 19).

Conclusion.—Ponder well the important lesson of the parable. Strive to realize the enormity and the evils of the sin of pride. The beauty, the reasonableness, the strength, the rewards of the virtue of humility—ennobled by the example of our Blessed Lord Himself.

Remember the warnings: " God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble " (James iv. 6). " Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted " (Luke xviii. 14).

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

IMPEDIMENTS TO THE OPERATION OF DIVINE GRACE.

"His ears were opened and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right."—Mark vii. 35.

Exordium.—This miracle was wrought in a heathen country, on the east side of Jordan, near the scene of the second multiplication of the loaves and fishes. The people of this region were remarkable for their ignorance of the things of God. On a previous occasion some of those same people had besought our Lord "That he would depart from their coasts" (Matt. viii. 34). The man who was cured was probably a heathen, like a majority of the others. All of them, in fact, under the paganizing influences of their surroundings (cf. Fouard, *Life of Christ*, ii. 12).

He was both deaf and dumb. St. Jerome remarks that these two terms are frequently used indiscriminately in the Gospel, for the reason that the two infirmities usually go together (cf. à Lapide, *Matt.* ix. 32).

Deafness and dumbness are considered as symbolical of certain defects of mind and will, opposed to the reception of divine truth, and to the practice of the Gospel maxims (*ibid.*)

In this sense the miracle described in to-day's Gospel illustrates a twofold evil all too prevalent, even in our own day: *Moral deafness*, or obduracy of heart, which renders one incapable of hearing or receiving the word of God.

Moral dumbness, which prevents the open profession of faith and the giving of glory to God. "With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10).

I. Many can not hear the word of God, because they have not received the gift of faith.

This is a supernatural gift. Man has no natural right to it; nor natural power to acquire it. God gives it freely, as He will, and to whom He will. All men need it. St. Paul says, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him" (Heb. xi. 6). Our Lord says, "No man cometh to the Father but by me" (John xiv. 6). "No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me, draw him. But there are some of you who believe not. Therefore did I say to you, that no man cometh to me unless it be given him by my Father" (John vi. 44, 65, 66).

But "No man can say Lord Jesus but by the Holy Ghost" (I. Cor. xii. 3). And yet there are some who, like the Ephesians, "Have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost" (Acts xix. 2). Faith, therefore, is a free gift of God, above the power of man, and yet necessary to him, in order to apprehend divine truth.

Many wilfully reject this gift of God; as the Jews in general: "I have spread forth my hands all the day to an unbelieving people, who walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts" (Isa. lxxv. 2., cf. Rom. x. 21).

As the Scribes and Pharisees in particular, contradicting our Lord, and attributing His works to Beelzebub: "By the prince of devils he casteth out devils" (Matt. ix. 34).

Many, by their evil lives, render themselves unworthy of being enlightened by the gift of faith, as Pharaoh, whose heart "was hardened," so that the wonders wrought by Moses made no impression upon him (Exod. viii. 32).

The profligate Romans, who "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. And as they

liked not to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate sense" (Rom. i. 25, 28).

The same causes of ignorance and infidelity, of moral deafness, exist at the present day, and produce the same effects.

II. There is also *moral dumbness*.

Those who do not know and can not hear, can not be expected to "speak right." Can only "foam out their own confusion" (Jude i. 13).

Many even can hear, and have or should have heard, but are dumb—neglect or refuse to speak to defend their faith. Sometimes through indifference, sometimes through culpable ignorance, often through shame, because their profession would be in contradiction with their lives, which they do not wish to amend. Frequently through fear, human respect. Sometimes silence, amounting to virtual apostasy, is observed, through base, selfish, mercenary motives. They are willing to fall down and adore the devil for the reward which he offers them.

Lastly, some speak indeed, but do not "speak right." Untruthful, profane, insincere, deceitful—all of which is, of course, offensive to God. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xii. 22). "I hate pride and arrogance, and every wicked way, and a mouth with a double tongue" (ibid. viii. 13).

III. The miracle in to-day's Gospel shows our Lord's power and willingness to cure these moral infirmities.

Commentators call our attention to the extraordinary pains which He took to effect this twofold cure (cf. Maldonatus, in loco. Item, Trench on Miracles, p. 275).

Leads the poor creature aside from the crowd. First opens his ears "with the finger of God." Touches his tongue with the same divine finger moistened with the sacred saliva of heavenly wisdom.





“And looking up to heaven He groaned” at the picture before Him of human wretchedness (cf. Maldonatus in v. 34).

The cure is perfect: “Immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right.”

The poor, ignorant heathen is no longer a mere animal, deaf and dumb to the things of God, but a rational creature, with his intelligence supernaturally enlightened.

Hears and understands eternal truths. Proclaims them joyfully and courageously. Is a true Christian!

Conclusion.—Very many stand sadly in need of this same divine aid. A sacred duty to pray for them.

Humbly acknowledge that we all need it at times ourselves. No one can claim that he always listens to the voice and the word of God as attentively as he should.

No one can claim to be entirely free from moral dumbness. We often fail to speak when we should. Often have an impediment in our speech. Do not “speak right.” Place ourselves confidently in the hands of our Blessed Lord. Offer no obstacle to the exercise of His divine power upon us. The result will be a perfect cure and great joy.

We, too, will be forced to say with the multitude: “He hath done all things well: He hath both made the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.”

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

OUR LORD'S EXPLANATION OF THE LAW OF CHARITY.

"You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."—Matt. v. 43, 44.

Exordium.—The parable of the Good Samaritan affords another striking example of our Lord's way of teaching: He takes advantage of the circumstances of place, occasion, etc., or of the questions or actions of those around Him.

The seventy-two disciples have just returned from their first mission, overjoyed at their success. Our Lord gently moderates their enthusiasm by bidding them rejoice rather *that their names were written in heaven* (Luke x. 20). At the same time He says to them "Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see." Greater things than the prophets and kings of old had ever seen.

Immediately a question is asked by a stranger in the crowd, by one "Learned in the Law," hoping that our Lord's answer might be in contradiction with the Law and the prophets: "Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?"

Vain hope! He is told to read the Law for himself: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, etc. . . . and thy neighbor as thyself."

"Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live," replied our Lord—confirming what He had previously said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not think that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17).

The "Doctor of the Law" is still "willing to justify himself;" but, at the same time, feels his ignorance, and asks for information (cf. à Lapide in loco.): "Who is my neighbor?" he asks.

The way is prepared. The simple parable shows the utter falsity of the Jewish interpretation of the law; its true meaning; and how it should be observed.

I. The characters in the parable show this admirably. The poor man that fell among the robbers was doubtless a Jew. Was in his own country. Within a few hours' journey of the Holy City. The two who passed him by were not only Jews, but a priest and a Levite. Both specially bound by their profession to the exercise of charity. It was to them that the law was given (Lev. xiv. 18).

Must have recognized him as one of their own. Yet "seeing him, they passed by." Utter hollowness of their vaunted zeal for the observance of the Law. Such the habitual conduct of the Jews.

II. Who were the Samaritans? The Kingdom of Israel, or the Ten Tribes, was destroyed by the Assyrians, more than seven hundred years before the coming of our Lord. Almost the entire population led away captives; and their places filled by heathens from the dominions of the conquerors (IV. Kings xvii.; Josephus, bk. ix., c. xiv.; à Lapide, Luke xvii. 16).

These heathens being miraculously punished for their idolatry, soon began to worship the God of Israel (*ibid.*, Kings and Josephus).

Three or four centuries later, they built a rival temple, and established the regular Jewish services, under a renegade High Priest from Jerusalem; and Samaria became the refuge of all Jews who fell into disgrace at Jerusalem (Josephus, bk. xi., c. viii.; II. Esdras, xiii. 28).

Naturally these outlawed Jews, and the small remnant of the original inhabitants, gradually intermingled and intermarried with

the Gentiles from Assyria and Persia—much to the disgust of the Jews of Judea.

Such was the foreign and mongrel population, hated, held in the utmost contempt; warred upon, pillaged, insulted, and maltreated on every occasion by the haughty descendants of David and Solomon.

All this was well known and perfectly understood by our Lord's hearers. Yet it was a Samaritan who proved himself a true neighbor. What better or stronger illustration could our Lord have chosen for the lesson He wished to teach?

The Jews neither understood nor practised the law of Charity. Even one "learned in the Law" did not know *who was his neighbor*.

III. *We can no longer plead ignorance. Every fellow-being is our neighbor.* Regardless of race, nationality, creed, or color. Regardless of whether he be our friend or our enemy: "I say to you, Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this?"

Charity toward the poor, the sick, the hungry, the afflicted, the stranger, the sinner: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. xxv. 40).

Numberless occasions in our daily life to show this charity to *our neighbor*—to our fellow-being. Giving him the same sympathy, the same comfort, the same assistance; wishing him the same success that we desire for ourselves: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. vii. 12). "Turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee" (Tob. iv. 7).

Conclusion.—Our Lord has made clear to us the great Law of





Charity. Has affirmed its necessity, as the condition of entering eternal life. Has repeatedly encouraged us by the promise of its reward: "Do good, and lend; hoping for nothing thereby; and your reward shall be great; and you shall be called the sons of the Most High" (Luke vi. 35). Thanks to our Blessed Lord for the lesson, and for the encouragement. Try to imitate the Good Samaritan. "This do, and thou shalt live."

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GRATITUDE FOR THE GIFTS OF GOD.

“There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger.”
—Luke xvii. 18.

Exordium.—The Gospel account of the cure of the ten lepers points out clearly three things which our Lord doubtless wished to teach by the miracle: 1. When we desire anything of God, we must ask for it earnestly and with faith, i. e., believing that He is able to give it, and willing to do so, if it be for our good. 2. That God expects gratitude for His gifts and favors. 3. That very many, especially of those who owe the most, fail to pay this debt of gratitude.

I. The lepers prayed earnestly; and their conduct shows that they had the requisite faith in our Lord.

Had other good dispositions. They “stood afar off”—in obedience to the law, and in a spirit of humility—being fully conscious of their wretched condition. They were united in prayer—prayed with one voice (à Lapide, et Maldonatus, in loco). They “lifted up their voice”—prayed aloud, not so much on account of their distance from our Lord, as from their desire to obtain their cure (sic Maldonatus).

Notwithstanding their earnestness in prayer, our Lord tests their faith. Wishes to see whether they have real, unshaken confidence in Him. Does not perform an instantaneous cure, as He had done on many occasions. Even once in the case of a leper (Matt. viii. 2).

Tells them to go and show themselves to the priests. Strange order; since the supposed object of their going was not that the priests should cure them, but should simply declare them to be already

cured and free from the disease (cf. à Lapide and Maldonatus). The lepers knew this; nevertheless they started; such was their confidence in our Lord. Their faith rewarded. They are cured on the way.

Thus that God frequently answers our prayers *sooner* than we expect. Faith often weak on this particular point. Persons inclined to fix *the time* at which they expect their prayers to be answered, v. g., on the ninth day of a novena—neither before nor after. God's goodness in this respect, often used as an argument against prayer.

II. God expects a grateful acknowledgment of His favors. The words of our Lord show this most explicitly.

Gratitude.—"A sense of obligation for favors received."

This "obligation" requires that there be an acknowledgment of the favor; thanks returned for it; remembrance of it; respect for the benefactor; and, lastly, proof that one is worthy of the favor received. This what all men rightly expect in regard to favors conferred.

Has been truly said that, "In the general estimation of mankind, gratitude approaches nearer than any other virtue to justice."

No wonder that God expects it. The number and frequency of His gifts demand that this sentiment of gratitude should never be absent from the human heart.

III. Unfortunately, such is not the case. God too frequently receives only ingratitude from those upon whom He has conferred the greatest favors.

Ten lepers cleansed. Only one returned to give thanks, and he a poor despised and hated Samaritan. The nine were Jews—of God's chosen people. Reared and instructed in His law, and boasted of it: "He hath not done in like manner to every nation: and his judgments he hath not made manifest to them" (Ps. cxlvii. 20).

So it is at the present day. Forgetfulness of those who receive the most abundant temporal gifts—riches, health, prosperity, education.

Gratitude often seen on the part of the poor, the unfortunate, the afflicted, the ignorant, for an occasional crumb of comfort, a fleeting ray of hope and consolation.

Forgetfulness of those who have received great gifts in the moral and supernatural order. Surrounded from infancy by the best moral and religious influences. Sheltered from temptation and sin. Given frequently the grace of repentance and facility for receiving the sacraments.

God is “the searcher of hearts and reins” (Ps. vii. 10). He alone knows the truly grateful; whether it be those whom He has thus loaded with favors, and who enjoy the esteem and respect of their fellow men; or whether it be the poor, despised, struggling sinner—who may fall frequently—who may contract the leprosy of sin; but when cured, always returns, and with a loud voice glorifies God, as did the poor Samaritan.

Conclusion.—Have we been duly grateful to God for all His gifts; or have we been so blind as to turn them against Him by making an evil use of them? God requires a strict account: “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required” (Luke xii. 48). The servant who knows the will of his master, and fails to do according to that will, “shall be beaten with many stripes” (ibid., v. 47). “The earth that drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth thorns and briers, is very near unto a curse: whose end is to be burnt” (Heb. vi. 8). Strive to have an abiding sense of gratitude to God for His gifts. Prove it by making a good use of them, in justice and righteousness. For “The gift of God abideth with the just: and his advancement shall have success forever” (Ecclus. xi. 17).





FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOD OUR ONLY MASTER.

“No man can serve two masters.”—Matt. vi. 24.

Exordium.—The lesson of to-day's Gospel not a new one. Our Lord repeatedly insisted upon it during His earthly ministry. God's sole and sovereign right to our love and service. All creatures to be loved in God, and for God; the goods of earth to be used for His honor and glory, and as a means of coming to Him. “Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and him *only* shalt thou serve” (Luke iv. 8).

It is clearly implied in the first commandment: “I am the Lord thy God: . . . Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. I am the Lord thy God, mighty and jealous” (Exod. xx. 2, 3, 5). To love any of God's creatures *equally* with Him, or *more than* Him, i. e., to give to creatures any part of the love that is due to God, or to allow our attachment to them to cause us to offend Him, is a species of *idolatry*. “The Lord is a jealous God, and a revenger” (Nahum i. 2). “I am the Lord that love judgment, and hate robbery in a holocaust” (Is. lxi. 8).

God has an absolute right to our love and service. He has created us and all things else *for Himself*—for His own honor and glory. He is our *sole* Master.

“Thine are the heavens, and thine the earth: the world, and the fulness thereof thou hast founded” (Ps. lxxxviii. 12, 13). Again, at the close of his life, holy David makes this solemn profession before all the people: “Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory; and to thee is praise: for all that is in heaven

and in earth is thine. Thine are riches, and thine is glory: thou hast dominion over all: in thy hand is power and might" (I. Par. xxix. 11, 12).

The Jews repeatedly forgot all this. Men still forget it. Our Lord reminds us:

I. We *can not* serve two masters—God and mammon.

By *mammon* is meant *riches*—worldly possessions, and worldly pleasures and gratifications of every kind: "All these," says the tempter, "will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt *adore me*" (Matt. iv. 9).

Utterly impossible to serve two masters, each of whom claims our whole service. Impossible to serve two who are rivals—whose interests are directly opposed (cf. Kenrick *in loco*). Perfectly evident in all human affairs: What man will employ as confidential agent one whom he knows to be devoted to another, or hired previously to work against his interests?

In politics how is a man regarded, who is known to serve alternately two opposite parties?

In the most sacred of all human ties—marriage—who will trust or tolerate a divided affection?

II. Not only *impossible* to serve *two* masters: it is *unnecessary*. God, the only Master, is a good Master—kind and generous.

He possesses and controls all things. Bestows His bounty upon all His creatures—even upon the irrational and inanimate ones: The birds of the air, the lilies of the field—even the grass.

"Are not you of much more value than they?" asks our Lord. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: better are you than many sparrows" (Matt. x. 29-31).

"Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things."

III. Not only *unnecessary* to try to serve the world, but is utterly *useless*. Be it always remembered that the "service" here condemned is that service which interferes with the service of God—robs Him of what is His due—for He is "a jealous God, and a revenger."

Over-anxiety, dishonesty, selfishness, complete absorption in the pursuit of riches, pleasures, mere human desires, or ambitions. Our Lord tells us that this is futile: "Which of you, by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?" (cf. Kenrick in loco).

Tells us that "not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of *these*"—lilies of the field.

Solomon himself, after recounting all his riches, and pleasures, and great achievements, says: "And when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to all the labors wherein I had labored in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind" (Eccles. ii. 11).

Daily experience teaches the same lesson: Uncertainty, disappointment, failure, misfortune, illusions, and deceptions in the pursuit of worldly happiness and so-called "success" or "prosperity"—in the service of mammon.

Conclusion.—Exhortation: Strive to understand and to heed the lesson which our Lord has taken such pains to teach us: God is our *only* Master. He alone has a right to our service; and He demands it.

It is a duty indeed to be industrious, energetic, desirous to make the best of this world's goods—to employ the talents entrusted to

us. But remember the just rule and measure laid down by our Blessed Lord: "Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21). Use the goods of this world, not to offend God, but to please and glorify Him: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (I. Cor. x. 31). No undue solicitude. No treacherous abandonment of God. No vain, useless efforts to serve the wrong master. But "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).





FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON TO LIFE.

"Young man, I say to thee, Arise! And he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother."—Luke vii. 14, 15.

Exordium.—The Gospels mention only three miracles of raising the dead to life, performed by our Lord: The widow's son; the daughter of Jairus (Matt. ix.; Mark v.; Luke viii.); and Lazarus (John xi.).

St. Augustine (Homil. III. Noct.) remarks that there were probably many others, as St. John (xxi. 25) says: "There are also many other things that Jesus did: which, if they were written, every one of them, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written."

The miracle recorded in to-day's Gospel teaches us three things: 1. The deep compassion of Jesus, "The Man of Sorrows," for human sorrow and affliction. 2. That He is the Physician of the *soul* as well as of the *body*. 3. Where and how parents should seek the resurrection of their wayward children from the death of sin.

I. Jesus the Comforter of the afflicted.

Nothing more beautifully touching and pathetic than the Gospel narrative of this death scene: The corpse was that of "an only son of his mother; and she was a widow." Her husband dead; her only son also. No one left to continue the family name—the greatest human affliction that could befall a mother in Israel. The body already taken from her desolate home, was being borne beyond the gate of the town. Was within a short distance of the tomb in which it was to lie, and "see corruption." The bitterest moment of final

parting at hand. Human sympathy indeed not wanting: "A great crowd of the city was with her." But what could *they* do? Only aid her in giving expression to her hopeless, inconsolable grief. Augment it by their cries and lamentations. Mourning over him "as one mourneth for an only son"; grieving over him "as the manner is to grieve for the death of the firstborn" (Zach. xii. 10). Only a moment more, and the heartrending wail will echo and reverberate through the deep and lonely ravines. All hope is abandoned. Sorrow, as a dense cloud, seems to veil the face of the God of Sinai. And yet the promise, made ages before by that same loving and all-merciful God, was about to be partially fulfilled: "He shall cast death down headlong: and the Lord God shall wipe away the tears from every face" (Isa. xxv. 8). Never did sweeter words fall upon human ear, nor find their way to a sadder heart, than those which came from the hallowed lips of our meek and gentle Saviour: "*Weep not!*"

Admirable manifestation of Divine power. Only a sign; and the procession halts in reverential silence. Only a word; "And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother."

(For contrast between the working of this miracle and that by Elias [III. Kings xvii. 21], and by Eliseus [IV. Kings iv. 33-35], cf. Fouard I. 279; or Trench, 189.)

Sentiments of that poor, grateful mother toward her Divine Benefactor.

II. Our Lord is the Physician, not only of the *body*, but also of the *soul*. In this twofold sense He says of Himself: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, even though he be dead, shall live" (John xi. 25).

Death always considered the type of sin. Hence commentators

and several of the Fathers of the Church give a figurative interpretation of this miracle.

The widow is the Church—whose Divine Spouse is in heaven.

She daily mourns the death of many of her children by sin. Rejoices daily over many raised up again to the life of grace by Him who raised the widow's son at Naim (Cf. St. Augustine III. Noct.).

The corpse represents the soul being borne helplessly along by the force of its unbridled or uncontrolled passions.

Our Lord stops the procession by simply touching the coffin, or wooden frame on which the body lay, thus sanctifying it, as he afterward sanctified the wood of the cross—His own bier.

This initial grace checks the course of the passions; destroys their dominion. The soul responds. "He that was dead" arises and begins to speak. No longer the language of the thoughtless, giddy worldling, or the riotous prodigal; but words of repentance and edification, that touch the hearts of his boon companions (who were carrying him to his grave) and make them "glorify God," and feel that the time of their own conversion is at hand. For a great Prophet had arisen among them, and God had evidently graciously visited His people (*Ita à Lapide in loco*).

III. A consoling lesson for parents in this miracle.

Their greatest sorrow in this world is to see their child stray from the path of virtue—die the death of sin. To see him borne helplessly away from them by his own unbridled passions, or by the overmastering influence of evil companions.

Sad and deplorable as is this misfortune, it is often more the result of human weakness (perhaps *inherited* weakness) and youthful thoughtlessness, than deliberate malice or hopeless depravity.

Whatever the cause, the child *is dead*. His corpse is being borne to the grave of eternal punishment.

Where and how will the sorrowing parents find comfort and consolation? By appealing in fervent, unremitting prayer to the Physician of souls—by patience, gentleness, and prudence; above all, by consistent, edifying *example*. The indignant parent who claims to have been better, when a boy, than his son is now, might occasionally ask himself if he did not have a *better father*. ■

Conclusion.—Thanks to our Blessed Lord for His loving sympathy in all our afflictions and sorrows. Thanks for raising us up again so often to the life of grace. Exhortation to parents, to be watchful, prayerful, prudent, patient, and hopeful. Exhortation to the young to beware of entering upon evil courses—of becoming the slaves of their passions, or of allowing themselves to be carried off unresistingly, even before the eyes of a sorrowing mother, by evil associates.

Exhortation to those who may have erred, to stop in their course and listen for the life-restoring words of our Blessed Lord: “Young man, I say to thee, Arise!”

If all will strive to learn the lessons taught by the miracle, “the Lord God *will surely* wipe away the tears from *many a sorrowing* face.”





SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

PHARISAISM, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

“And they could not answer him in regard to these things.”—Luke xiv. 6.

Exordium.—A careful reading of to-day's Gospel shows that the chief subject of it is the *Pharisees*; and, as usual, they do not appear in a very favorable light: 1. While our Lord was their invited guest “they were watching him”—plotting against Him. 2. Our Blessed Lord, of course, knew their thoughts, and so, before mercifully exercising His Divine power in curing the poor man afflicted with the dropsy, He felt it necessary to refute their false notions about the Sabbath. 3. Noticing their pride and excessive care in regard to rank and dignity—“how they chose the first places at table”—He gave them a very pointed lesson on humility.

The questions should occur to us: Why are the Pharisees so often, and always so unfavorably, spoken of in the Gospel? Why is our Lord so exceptionally and unrelentingly severe on them? Why does He so frequently expose and condemn them in public?

The answer seems to be: Because He knew that their influence was for evil, and He wished to destroy it. He knew that their example was likely to be followed, and this He wished to prevent.

Examine to-day, 1. Who were the Pharisees, and what their chief faults? 2. Have they any imitators at the present day?

I. The Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews—the most orthodox. St. Paul was one of them, and his father before him

(Acts xxiii. 6). They came into prominence about a century and a half before the time of our Lord (cf. Josephus, Ant. Bk. XIII. C. XI. 5; Edersheim, Messiah I. 96).

Were zealous in opposing the heathenizing influence of the Greeks and Romans, whose idolatrous and demoralizing innovations were favored by the Sadducees and the Herodians (cf. Maclear, N. T., 113; Class Book New Testament History).

They believed in the existence of angels, good and bad; in the immortality of the soul; the resurrection of the dead; and future rewards and punishments.

Of all the Jews, they should have been the first to receive our Lord, and should have become His most fervent and faithful followers.

Prevented by *pride*. Excessive zeal easily generates self-conceit. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican. *Jealousy* of our Lord: They had long been looked up to as leaders. Hated to see our Lord gain such influence over the people. They loved "salutations in the market-place, and to be called Rabbi" (Matt. xxiii. 7).

Professed great austerity, but did not practise it. "They say, but do not" (Matt. xxiii. 3).

Were overzealous for minor details and ceremonies, and the washing of hands, etc. (Matt. xv. 2) and neglected "the weightier things of the law" (Matt. xxiii. 23).

They were *insincere*: "You are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts" (Luke xvi. 15). "Ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but within ye are full of rottenness and corruption" (Matt. xxiii. 25).

A partial excuse for them is that they really did not know our Lord as we know Him: "If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory" (I. Cor. ii. 8).

Nevertheless, the cause of their ignorance and blindness was their *pride, insincerity, and inconsistency.*

II. Have they any imitators at the present day? Need not speak of those who openly reject the teachings of our Lord, and the authority of the Church.

Let us look to ourselves, who, like the Pharisees, should, by our very profession, be most faithful followers of our Lord.

Examine, each one for himself, honestly and sincerely, whether any of their faults exist among us.

Pride and vain display: "Making broad their phylacteries and enlarging their fringes." "Loving the first places at feasts, and the first seats in the synagogues." Flocking to *fashionable* churches, with grand music, and despising the simple, humble place of worship. Caring less for the temple than for the gold of the temple—forgetting that in the humblest as well as in the grandest: "A *Greater* than the temple is here" (Matt. xii. 6). Sounding the trumpet when doing an alms-deed (Matt. vi. 2). Over-attention to exterior observances, "omitting the weightier things of the law, *judgment* (i. e. justice), *mercy*, and faith. Straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel" (Matt. xxiii. 23, 24). Over-severity in judging others. Forgetting that such severity not unfrequently implies blindness to our own defects—or leads to the commission of the same faults. "Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou doest the same things which thou judgest" (Rom. ii. 1).

Finally *inconsistency*: Prominent "Church members." Sober and "respectable," as the world goes; but never approaching the sacraments; known to be negligent in morals; selfish, overreaching, unscrupulous in business methods; harsh, and ungenerous to the poor; without sympathy for the unfortunate.

Another form of *inconsistency*: Too much piety *in church*; too little *outside of it*. Impatience, intemperance, profanity, quarreling, backbiting, etc.—faults too frequently committed by persons who imagine themselves to be “pious.”

Conclusion.—Show that these are all Pharisaical faults. Similar in nature; similar in effects; similar in guilt.

All have been repeatedly forbidden by our Lord.

We “could not answer Him in regard to these things.”

Exhortation to honest, sincere self-examination, to see how far we are really affected by “the leaven of the Pharisees.”

The *remedy*.—Charity, as explained by St. Paul (I. Cor. xiii.). It is directly opposed to all the faults of Pharisaism: “Charity is patient, is kind: envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious; seeketh not her own; thinketh not evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth” (vs. 4, 5).

Seek earnestly to acquire this divine gift: “He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him” (I. John iv. 16).



SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT IN THE LAW.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind."—Matt. xxii. 37.

Exordium.—The Gospel just read furnishes another example of the malice and insincerity of the Pharisees.

They were constantly endeavoring to draw from our Lord some expression which they might be able to construe as (or if need be, distort into) a contradiction of the teachings of Holy Writ.

Never did they fail more signally than on the present occasion.

In reply to their tempting question, He gave them the words of the law, which they held in the highest and most sacred veneration. The very commandment which God had given to Moses (Deut. vi. 5) and which all the people, from generation to generation, had been required to learn and to have always present in their minds: "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart. And thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign *upon thy hand*, and they shall *move between thy eyes*" (vs. 6-8).

This command, the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, obeyed *literally*, if not *according to the spirit*. All these words, together with two or three other passages of similar import, were written upon parchment, enclosed in small leather cases, and worn, one on the arm, and the other on the forehead, being bound by leather

thongs. These were the *phylacteries* of which the Pharisees made such a vain display—for which they were rebuked by our Lord.

Moreover, these passages, known as the “Shema,” were faithfully recited, morning and evening (Cf. Edersheim, *Jewish Social Life*, 268).

No wonder the Pharisees were reduced to silence.

But our Lord was reproclaiming the law *for us*, as well as for them.

The letter of it is familiar to us; let us try to understand better the *spirit*. I. It would seem that such a command ought to be unnecessary. II. Why then did God give it? III. How are we to fulfil it? i. e., How are we to love Him?

I. It seems only reasonable that we should love God above all things, without being *commanded* to do so. This supposes, of course, that we know who and what God is. “For he who cometh to God must believe that he exists, and is a rewarder of them who seek him” (Heb. xi. 6). St. Gregory I. (Homil. II. Post Pent.) asks, “Who can love that which he does not know?”

God took unmeasured pains to make Himself known under the Old Law. He has been made known to us under the New, as our First Beginning, our Last End, and our Sovereign Good. By the gift of faith we firmly believe this.

By our very nature we constantly seek—reach out after—what seems to us to be *good*. We are not satisfied with what we are, or what we have within ourselves. Our heart constantly yearns for something the possession of which will make us always happy and contented—for the *permanent, enduring good*; for something of which we will not grow tired; which will not deceive or abandon us; from which we can not be separated.

The experience of all men, in all ages, proves that this yearning

of the human heart can not be satisfied by creatures—by anything *other than God*—by any sentiment or affection that does not tend to God as its ultimate end.

Friends, riches, pleasures, honors—what disappointments, vicissitudes, sorrows, heartaches connected with all of them!

Bitterest of all, they and we *have an end* in this world—*separation* inevitable.

Solomon's verdict: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity"—*emptiness* (Eccles. i. 2). St. Gregory (*loco citato*) remarks that the more we have of "corporal delights," i. e., pleasures or gratifications afforded by creatures, the sooner we are fatigued by satiety and disgust. Always long for them when without them; weary of them as soon as obtained. While it is just the opposite with "spiritual pleasures," i. e., the graces given by God to the soul; the contemplation of His perfections; the doing of His holy will. When these are entirely absent, the soul has no desire for them. But the more it has of them, the greater its desire, the keener its relish for them. No satiety.

Hence the words of the Psalmist: "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

Also the well known words of St. Augustine (Confess. Bk. I. C. I.), "Thou hast created us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is not at rest till it rest in thee."

II. Why, then, was it necessary that God should command us so stringently to love Him?

"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vain" (Ps. xciii. 11). Conduct of Adam and Eve. General corruption before the flood: "The earth was corrupted before God, and was filled with iniquity" (Gen. vi. 11). After the flood, pride and self-reliance, provoking the curse of Babel. Repeated perversity of the

Jews, from the Exodus to the Captivity. Corruption of the most "civilized" of the Gentiles: "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things, . . . and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom. i. 23, 25).

All this, and all that has happened since, was present to the all-seeing eye of God when He gave His command to Moses.

III. How are we to love God? He has told us plainly enough: *With the whole heart*; i. e., voluntarily, and in preference to all creatures. It is only reasonable to love most that which is best.

Not necessary that this love be emotional, as the love we may legitimately have for our fellow-beings.

Need not manifest itself by the same eagerness that we show in the pursuit of temporal objects.

But must dominate all other affection. All other affection must be sacrificed, rather than allow it to separate us from God: "He that loveth father or mother, . . . or son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. x. 37). "Who then shall separate us from the charity of Christ?" (Rom. viii. 35).

With the whole soul, i. e., make Him the ultimate end of all our thoughts and desires. Thinking of creatures—loving and valuing them only in God, as representing His perfections, and as leading us to Him.

With the whole mind; employing our whole intelligence, all the faculties of our mind in a just appreciation of God, and the things of God—the things of eternity.

Bearing always in mind the words of our Blessed Saviour: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss



of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36, 37). (Cf. à Lapide in Matt. xxii. 37.)

Conclusion.—Thanks to Almighty God for His fatherly love in protecting us, by His parental authority, against our childish folly, forcing us to do what we would probably have neglected.

Strive to learn well this first commandment of the law. Let it be in your hearts: "Sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey; sleeping and rising" (Deut. vi. 7).

The second will then be easy of fulfilment: "And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. *This do, and thou shalt live*" (Luke x. 27, 28).

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

MORAL PALSY AND ITS CURE.

“And behold they brought to him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed.”—Matt. ix. 2.*

Exordium.—Two things to be remarked in the miraculous cures effected by our Lord: I. That the malady of the body is evidently a symbol of the spiritual maladies to which the soul is subject, and with which it is often afflicted. II. That our Lord, in curing the body, invariably shows His tender solicitude for the welfare of the soul.

True, He explicitly denies that physical infirmity is *always* the necessary result of actual sin, or that the afflicted person is in the state of sin. “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John ix. 3).

Nevertheless, sickness and all manner of bodily defects and deformities are, as well as death, the result and a part of the punishment of *original sin*; and every species of corporal malady has, as it were, its counterpart in one or another of the ravages caused by sin in the soul.

I. There are three diseases especially typical of sin:

Fever: Typical of the heat of the sensual passions. They enervate the normal action of the soul; weaken its moral and intellectual power; destroy its relish, or appetite, for spiritual nourishment; produce a nausea, or an aversion, for all that is healthful and ennobling, and a delirious, abnormal strength in trying to satisfy a

* For a lengthy commentary on this miracle, suggestive of other subjects, cf. à Lapidè in loco.

depraved craving for gratifications base, unlawful, and fatally injurious. As in the case of the demented fever patient, these worse than vain and futile efforts are followed by utter moral collapse and almost total extinction of the vital powers of the soul—*of the spiritual sense* (cf. à Lapide in Matt. viii. 14).

Leprosy—with its loathsome repulsiveness: The type of the terrible visible curse that not unfrequently falls upon unbridled sensual indulgence (Item à Lapide, Ibid. v. I.).

Palsy, or *Paralysis*: Differs essentially from the other two. Has not the delirious restlessness, and varying phases of strength, and weakness of fever; nor the revolting, cancerous rottenness of leprosy. It is simply a state of utter helplessness—inability to walk or move, or help one's self. The very lack of strength and vitality produces a certain passive tranquillity and prevents the manifestation of acute pain or suffering. When it lasts for a long time friends become accustomed to seeing it. The invalid himself becomes reconciled to his fate. Seems to have forgotten that he was ever better off.

In all the symptoms and phases of this disease it is a perfect type of the spiritual condition of the indifferent, negligent Christian (cf. à Lapide).

Spiritual paralytics do not seem to suffer any pain—of conscience. But they can not walk to church, or, at least, not to the sacraments. Are bedridden. Need to be carried.

St. Mark (ii. 3) says it took four men to carry the paralytic into the presence of our Lord. But he was at least willing and anxious to be carried. Our Lord saw his faith, and rewarded it.

It is greatly to be feared that there are many spiritual paralytics who are not willing to be carried. Would require more than four men. They resist the prayers and pious efforts made in their behalf.

II. How is the cure of this moral palsy to be effected? Clearly

explained in the Gospel narrative: *First*, the paralytic must be willing to be *brought* to our Lord. Must allow himself to be brought by those divinely appointed—our Lord's ministers, whose duty it is to "Reprove, entreat, rebuke, in all patience and doctrine" (II. Tim. iv. 2). He must realize his own helplessness. Must have unbounded *faith* in our Lord. Not be ashamed to allow others to do for him what is necessary. Not mind what the crowd may think or say. *Secondly*, with these dispositions on the part of the invalid, two things will be done for him by the divine Physician: 1. He will remove the very root and germs of the malady, by the remission of his sins: "Be of good heart, son; thy sins are forgiven thee." 2. He restores his strength—gives him the grace to rise and "walk in the newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4). "Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house."

III. This miracle teaches that the cure of the soul should always be sought before that of the body.

Hence, first duty in time of sickness: Examination of conscience and reception of the sacraments. Fatal folly of delay. Ask at once to be carried to the feet of our Lord.

Exhortation.—Avoid fatal indifference and neglect of religious duty. Cast away false shame—human respect. Imitate the faith of the paralytic. The reward will be the same: "Be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee." Rise in the strength of sincere amendment of life. Persevere in it, so as to preserve the health of both body and soul. Then will you be able to say with the Royal Psalmist, "I have rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxi).



NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

RESPECT FOR THE SANCTITY OF GOD.

"Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?"—Matt. xxii. 12.

Exordium.—This parable seems at first sight to be almost a repetition of the one related by St. Luke (xiv. 16-24). Yet there are several differences, doubtless intended by our Lord to point a different moral. One is called "a great supper," made by "a certain man"; the other "a marriage," prepared by "a king, for his son." In the one, all gave excuses or reasons for not coming; in the other, none "begged to be excused," while some, on the contrary, "laid hands on his servants, and, having treated them contumeliously, put them to death." Finally, to-day's Gospel gives the important additional incident of *the unworthy guest*—the man without the "wedding garment." Our Lord's comment upon this last incident clearly teaches a different lesson from the one drawn from the previous parable: Respect for the sanctity of God, in whom "we live and move and *have our being*" (Acts xvii. 28). Respect for the sanctity of God, before whom we must appear, "face to face" (I. Cor. xiii. 12), in the life to come.

I. Catholic commentators agree that in to-day's Gospel, as in many other passages in the New Testament, by the expression "kingdom of heaven" is meant the Church of God on earth—compared at one time to "a grain of mustard seed" (Matt. xiii. 31); at another to "a net cast into the sea," etc. (cf. St. Greg. Hom. Com. Virg.).

The "King who made a marriage for his Son" is God. The Son, our Lord. The marriage is His incarnation and espousal with His Church. The servants sent to call the guests to the banquet are His

Apostles and their successors. Those who "neglected and went their ways, and put His servants to death," are they who refuse the call to the true faith; who revile its teachings and persecute its ministers.

The man without the wedding garment represents all those who, whether Catholics or non-Catholics, profess to believe in Christ, but do not live a truly Christian life. Who have *not* due respect for the sanctity of God. Who disregard His repeated warnings and commands: "I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1). "I am the Lord your God: *be holy, because I am holy*. Defile not your souls" (Lev. xi. 44).

Frequent reminders of the *obligation of holiness*, in the new law: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, *holy*, pleasing to God, your reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1). "He (God the Father) hath chosen us in *Him* (Christ our Lord) before the foundation of the world that we should be *holy* and *unspotted in His sight*" (Eph. i. 4). "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven (i. e., into eternal happiness), but he that *doth the will of my Father* who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). "This is *the will of God*, your sanctification. . . . For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but *unto sanctification*" (I. Thess. iv. 3, 7).

Many will come to our Lord in the last day claiming to have believed in Him, and even to have done many good works in His name, but He says, "Then will I profess to them, *I never knew you*: depart from me, you that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22, 23).

Many foolish, thoughtless virgins will come begging admittance to the final wedding feast, only to receive the same answer: "*I know you not*" (Matt xxv. 12).

Heedlessness and vain presumption of many Christians in spite of

these clear and oft-repeated warnings. Negligence in daily life; in staying away from the sacraments, and from Mass on Sunday. Coldness and indifference. Speedy relapse into sin. Sudden or poorly prepared death. "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?"

II. Failure to appreciate the august sanctity of the divine Presence in heaven. God is infinite sanctity. Can not abide—is obliged by His very nature to repel and cast far from Him whatever is not perfectly pure, clean, and tried as gold in the crucible. "There shall not enter into *his eternal city* anything defiled" (Apoc. xxi. 27).

Comparatively few persons guilty of negligence in regard to the requirements of decent, polite society. Are deeply impressed by the relative dignity and importance of the occasion. Very careful to learn what they should wear, and how they should act. Would not for the world disgrace themselves by ignorance or unbecoming dress.

What an event and ordeal of a lifetime to prepare to assist at a presidential reception or a regal coronation!

It is only when the question arises of entering the palace of the king or kings that "fools rush in where *angels* fear to tread."

III. Useless to attempt to minimize the consequences of such temerity by alleging the goodness and the mercy of God; that we are His children; and that His house is our home.

We are His children *only by ransom and adoption*, through the atonement made by our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the only Son *by right*. He undertook to purchase *our adoption*. We know the price He paid. We know that His eternal, *loving* Father exacted of Him the last farthing of the debt. What right have *we* to expect greater leniency?

God is good and merciful; but He is also *just*; and justice must take the place of mercy and be satisfied, before any rational creature

can enter into the kingdom of heaven: "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die; and *after this the judgment*" (Heb. ix. 27) "We must all be manifested before the *judgment seat* of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil" (II. Cor. v. 10).

Conclusion.—Proper occasion to speak of the consoling belief in purgatory. Its thorough reasonableness. Either we must believe in it or we must deny some of the attributes of God; or we must despair of the salvation of almost the entire human race. "Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord; or who shall stand in His holy place?" (Ps. xxiii. 3). "The Lord your God is a great God, mighty and terrible, who accepteth no person, nor taketh bribes" (Deut. x. 17).

Its Scriptural warrant: "Nothing defiled can enter *heaven*." "The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (I. Cor. iii. 13, 15). "It is a holy and a wholesome thought, to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins" (II. Mach. xii. 46).

Exhortation.—Strive to acquire a deeper and more abiding sense of respect for the sanctity of God. Cherish a salutary fear of appearing before Him without the wedding garment. Remember the sentence pronounced upon the unfortunate intruder: "Bind his hands and his feet, and cast him forth into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Remember also the solemn warning of our blessed Lord: Not enough to say, "Lord, Lord"; not enough to be called to the knowledge of the true faith; not enough to be invited to the heavenly marriage feast of eternal happiness; but we must put on the wedding garment of holiness, that we may be worthy to enter: "For many are called, but few are chosen."



TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FALTERING FAITH.

“Unless you see signs and wonders, you do not believe.”—John iv. 48.

Exordium.—We would naturally be inclined to admire the Ruler mentioned in to-day’s Gospel, for going as he did to our Blessed Lord, and begging Him so earnestly to “come down to his house” and cure his son. And yet our meek and gentle Saviour seems to have reproached him. The question has probably occurred to many, Why did our Lord treat him thus?

St. Gregory (Hom. on the Gospel) raises the question, and answers it: Because “he doubted in Faith.” Thought it necessary that our Lord should *go down to his house* in order to cure his son. Believed in the healing power of His corporal presence. Did not believe in, or did not realize (more probably was ignorant of) His divine power, by which He was equally present everywhere, and to which space and distance were no obstacle.

Striking contrast between the conduct of the Ruler and that of the Centurion, who came to our Lord some months later, seeking the cure of his servant. In the latter case, our Lord, seeing the perfect Faith of the Roman officer, volunteered to *go down* and grant his request. But the Centurion answered in those beautiful words, so sacredly familiar: “Lord, I am not worthy that *thou* shouldst enter under my roof; but *only say the word*, and my servant shall be healed” (Matt. viii. 8).

“And Jesus hearing this marvelled, and said to them that followed Him: Amen, I say to you; I have not found so great faith in Israel”

(Matt. v. 10). The Faith of the Centurion satisfied our Lord. That of the Ruler did not; and whatever there was of reproach in His words to the latter, was doubtless intended as a warning and a lesson to us.

I. Our Lord very frequently reproaches His hearers, and even His disciples, with lack of faith, or confidence, in Him, and in His Eternal Father.

In His Sermon on the Mount, reproving oversolicitude about the needs of the body, He says: "How much more are you (than the birds of the air and the lilies and grass of the field) O ye of *little faith!*" (Matt. vi. 30). When His disciples thought it necessary to *wake Him up*, in order that He might save them from the perils of the tempest: "Why are ye fearful?" He asked, "O ye of *little faith!*" (Matt. viii. 26).

When on a certain occasion they had tried to relieve a possessed person, and had failed, they asked Him why. His answer was: "Because of your unbelief" (Matt. xvii. 19).

He often commends and rewards undoubting Faith: The case of the Centurion. Of those who brought the paralytic and laid him at His feet, having been obliged to remove the tiles from the roof in order to be able to do so (Matt. ix. 2). Of the poor woman who secretly touched the hem of His garment: "Daughter, *thy faith* hath made thee whole: go in peace, and be thou whole of thy disease" (Mark v. 25-34). Of the Canaanite woman pleading for the cure of her daughter: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour" (Matt. xv. 22-28). Of the blind man at Jericho, crying to our Lord, regardless of the rebukes and threats of many in the crowd: "Go thy way: *thy faith* hath made thee whole. And *immediately* he saw, and followed Him in the way" (Mark x. 46-52).

Makes the strength of the faith the measure of the gift: as in the case of the two blind men at *Capharnaum* (Cf. à Lapidé, in Matt. ix. 28). "Jesus saith to them: Do you believe that I can do this unto you? They say to him, Yea, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying, *According to your faith*, be it done unto you" (Matt. ix. 28, 29).

II. Although our Lord was not satisfied with the Faith of the Ruler, yet He granted his petition, out of compassion, no doubt, for his ignorance. Knowing the secrets of hearts, He saw that this good, well-meaning man was following the first glimmering of light; and that he would be faithful to greater graces, as in fact he was: "Himself believed, and his whole house."

For us at the present day it is far different. We have no excuse for faltering. We know who our Lord is. Not merely "a Good Man," or "a Prophet mighty in work and word before God and the people" (Luke xxiv. 19), but that He is "Christ the Son of the Living God" (Matt. xvi. 16). That *He and the Father are One*. That *He is God Omnipotent*—present to us (though invisible) at all times, and in all places. "For in him were all things created, in heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible: whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him, and in him: And he is before all, and by him all things consist" (Coloss. i. 16).

Knowing our Lord thus, there should be unbounded, unfaltering faith in His promises, and in His power to fulfil them.

What more generous or encouraging than His promises? "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive" (John xvi. 24). "*All things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive*" (Matt. xxi. 22). Only one condition imposed: Ask with simple, unwavering faith. Believing that God

can do what we ask. Leaving to Him the time and the manner.

"You ask, and receive not," says St. James, "because you ask amiss" (iv. 3). Some ask for improper things. Others through improper motives. Some in an improper manner. They expect to "see signs and wonders." Expect their prayers to be answered at a certain time, and in a certain way. Forget that God knows what we need, before we ask Him (Matt. vi. 32).

Some are ashamed to ask at all. Many would not have the courage to show the faith of those who laid the paralytic at our Lord's feet. Do not often see men in high station or public position show the faith of the Ruler—much less that of the Centurion.

Conclusion.—Exhortation to examine seriously into the various faults and inconsistencies to which we are liable, in regard to Faith: Weakness, lack of confidence, lack of courage to do what our faith would prompt us to do. Above all, lack of practical appreciation of our relations with God; of the Divine character, and lowly, sympathetic goodness of our Blessed Saviour. Pray for this earnest, living, unfaltering faith. Remember, too, the effect of the miracle upon the household of the Ruler. They all "believed"—became practical Christians. Hastened to make up for previous neglect. So it should be in every family, in return for the great favors God so frequently bestows in answer to prayer. This gratitude the best indication of a lively, honest, intelligent faith. To obtain this precious gift, do as the apostles did: Ask our Lord for it: "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 5). Or repeat the beautiful, humble prayer of the poor father who sought the cure of his son from epilepsy: "I do believe, Lord; help thou my unbelief" (Mark ix. 23).





TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

"If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences."—Matt. vi. 14.

Exordium.—Another striking example of the simplicity and the force of our Lord's teaching. Simplicity that can be understood by even the weakest intellect. Force to convince the strongest.

By this parable, our Lord shows the boundless goodness of God on the one hand, and the blind, heartless selfishness of man on the other. That God will be infinitely generous and forgiving us, *provided* we show a generous and forgiving spirit toward our fellow-men. But *only* on this condition. If we fail to comply with it, God will treat us as the king in the parable treated the cruel, ungrateful debtor. "So shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if you forgive not every one his brother, from your hearts."

Thus He explicitly affirms the *necessity* of *forgiving injuries*.

I. *The Infinite Goodness of God:*

The very figures employed by our Lord—doubtless not at random, but by design—set forth in a most striking manner the contrast between the lavish goodness of God and the cruel, niggardly selfishness of man: *Ten thousand talents* against *one hundred pence*. The proportion is as *twelve hundred thousand* to *one*; or, in round numbers, in our money, as *nineteen million* to *sixteen dollars* (cf. Fouard, II. p. 39).

The larger sum represents the enormity of our offences against God and His generosity in forgiving them.

Represents a debt which we could never pay.

The parable shows what would have happened to the unfortunate debtor, had not the king relented: Seizure of all his property; life-long slavery for himself, his wife, and his children.

Just what might happen to the sinner, as often as God should choose to visit *justice* upon him, instead of showing *mercy* and exercising patience.

How often it does happen, God alone knows. Dishonesty, punished by the loss, not only of the ill-gotten goods, but all that God had previously given. Hard-heartedness, envy, hatred, and revenge, by sickness, death; loss of children, or of wife or husband. Lies, calumny, defamation of neighbor's character, punished by public exposure of double or dishonest life; by disgraceful family discord, or by waywardness, and disreputable conduct of children. God, in His goodness, is constantly withholding these punishments where they have been repeatedly deserved. The evil spoken of others often comes home to the traducer.

II. The cruelty of the pardoned debtor toward his fellow-servant, a perfect picture of the ingratitude and blind *selfishness of man*. Many know in their hearts that they are debtors to the justice of God. That they have violated His law; have defrauded Him of His just right to honor, reverence, obedience. Make no effort to pay Him—have no intention of doing so; yet are constantly claiming respect, apologies, and reparation of injuries from their fellow-men. Like the embezzler who, while stealing millions, grinds and dispossesses the poor for the sake of a few paltry dollars.

Others even more inconsistent—more like the ungrateful debtor: They acknowledge in secret their debt; know they have offended God; go and suppliantly ask pardon in the sacred tribunal. Approach the sacraments with seeming reverence and humility; but immediately

go forth as haughty, exacting, and resentful as if they had never committed a fault, or felt the need of craving pardon.

Such is poor, selfish, human nature; prone to resentment, revenge; averse to forgiveness.

III. Forgiveness of injuries the necessary condition of pardon for our sins.

Our Lord tells us repeatedly that such is the will of His Father: "Forgive and you shall be forgiven" (Luke vi. 37). "If you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences" (Matt. vi. 15). "So shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if you forgive not, every one his brother, from your hearts." "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not shown mercy" (James ii. 13).

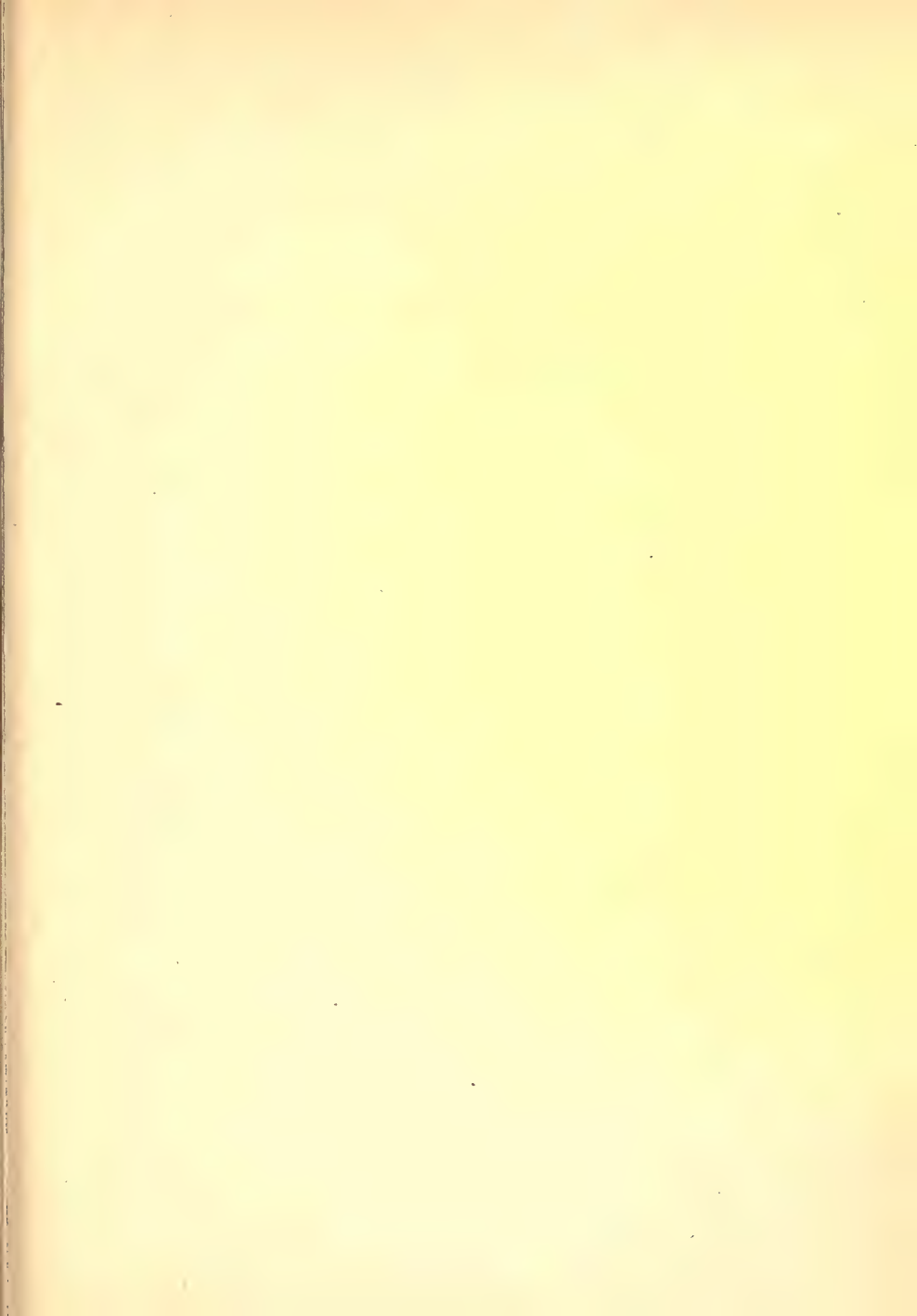
The condition is hard for human nature. But it is just and right; otherwise God would never have imposed it. He is supreme. May command whatsoever He chooses, and enforce obedience. Nor is He obliged to give a reward: "When you have done all things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done *only* that which we should have done" (Luke xvii. 10).

Nevertheless, He offers us a reward exceedingly great: The remission of our overwhelming debt, if we will but forgive our poor fellow-servant his small indebtedness to us.

Conclusion.—Exhortation to consider well this generous offer. Very probably we do not know the extent of our indebtedness. The man in the parable apparently did not, until he "was brought before the king." We do not judge ourselves as we judge others; frequently forget the evil we have done; take little account of the evil we may have caused others to do: "Who can understand sins? From my *secret* (forgotten) ones cleanse me, O Lord; and from *those of others* spare thy servant" (Ps. xviii. 13, 14). "If thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it?" (Ps. cxxix).

Forgive not, and you will be cast into prison, there to remain until you have paid the last farthing. "Revenge *is mine*," saith the Lord, "and I will repay" (Deut. xxxii. 35).

Strive to triumph over rebellious, vindictive nature. Believe the generous and infallible promise of our blessed, loving Saviour: "If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences."



TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY, HUMAN AND DIVINE.*

“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”—Matt. xxii. 21.

Exordium.—Nothing can be clearer than St. Matthew’s account of the conversation between our Lord and the hypocritical, treacherous Pharisees. Accuracy of the narrative literally corroborated by St. Mark (xii. 13-17). Our Lord says most explicitly that we must faithfully obey our temporal rulers, and at the same time omit nothing of the service we owe to God.

Yet in the moment of His supreme trial we find the Jewish mob, urged on by these same Pharisees—members of the Sanhedrim (cf. Maclear, N. T., 117)—accusing Him before Pilate, and saying: “We have found this man perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar” (Luke xxiii. 2).

Need not dwell upon this flagrant mendacity, as frequently seen in the conduct of the enemies of our Lord.

Rather study the lesson so briefly, but so clearly, taught by our divine Master. It was for all time, and never more needed than in our own day: *Obedience to Civil Authority. Obedience to the Law of God.*

I. Meaning of *Civil Authority*. The authority, or governing power, that directs men in their social relations, and protects them in their *social*, or *civil rights*.

* For abundant material, see Manning’s Lectures, *The Four Great Evils of the Day* and *The Fourfold Sovereignty of God*.

"Society," says Cardinal Manning, "is a collection of individuals, *not told by number*, but united and organized *by an intrinsic law of their nature*. For when God made man, *He made society*. It was a part of the first creation. It springs from the creation of man; because from man comes *the family*; from the family come *the people*, and from the people comes *the State*" (Fourfold Sovereignty of God, Lect. III.).

The same eminent writer says again: "The *civil order*, or *political society of man*, is the *Creation of God*, and howsoever it may be modified" (by circumstances—of time, form of government, etc.), "it has in it *three immutable principles*: The principle of *Authority*, which rules; the principle of *Obedience*, which subjects those under authority to its government; and the principle of *equal and reciprocal Justice* between those united under the same authority" (Four Great Evils, Lect. III.).

In to-day's Gospel, the name *Caesar* means the representative of *Civil Authority*—*Human Authority*, as *distinguished from*, but *not opposed to*, *Divine Authority*.

Our Lord tells us that this Human Authority has its rights, which *must be respected*: "Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's."

The reason is perfectly evident: This Authority, though *human*, i. e., vested in and exercised by *men*, is, nevertheless, of divine origin—is "the Creation of God."

"Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for *there is no power but from God*. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth *the ordinance of God*" (Rom. xiii. 1, 2).

II. Civil Authority robbed of its most sacred character—of the very source of its power—by *false teachers*, who claim that Civil Government is *absolute* in its authority—*independent of God Him-*

self; that *it* is the source and origin of all right (For this, and other errors condemned in the Syllabus of Pius IX., cf. *Four Great Evils*, Lect. III.).

Results of this false teaching: No conscientious respect for law or authority. No sense of *moral obligation* on the part of either the governed or the representatives of authority. Venality in office. The very badge of office comes to mean a *false key* to the Public Treasury. The uniform not infrequently designates an individual who has *obtained a license* (of which he is not ashamed) to roll in luxury and rear an upstart family *at the public expense*. Dishonesty in public office is a *moral cancer* that eats at the very vitals of national manhood, patriotism, and respect for Civil Authority.

This false teaching, with its false principles, goes even further. Leads eventually, and logically, to *anarchy* and *socialism*—to the subversion of all authority; the tearing down of thrones; and the assassination of rulers.

"They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind" (Osee viii. 7). They not only *rob* Caesar, but *murder* him.

III. Our Lord not only lays down the law of Obedience to Civil Authority and fidelity to our social obligations. He reminds us of another and a higher duty: "Render to God the things that are God's."

These two duties can never conflict. God never requires anything of us that will prevent us from being obedient, law-abiding citizens. Our civil rulers have no right to require of us anything that the law of God forbids. Should they do so, obedience to their command *ceases to be a duty*: "Commanding, we have commanded you, that you should not teach *in this name*" (of Jesus) said the High Priest to the apostles in Jerusalem. "We ought to obey God rather than man," was Peter's answer (Acts v. 28, 29).

"We are *not obliged* to answer thee concerning this matter," was the courageous reply of Daniel and his companions to the impious command of the tyrant Nabuchodonosor (Dan. iii. 16).

No man who deliberately sets at naught the Law of God can be expected to be faithful to the laws of his country and to his social obligations.

No man who is faithful to the Law of God will ever prove false to his country or to his fellow men.

Conclusion.—Have a sincere love of country, and respect for its laws, and its rulers. Honesty in the discharge of public functions, and in all social relations. Best proof of loyalty, patriotism, and public honesty, is *fidelity to the Law of God*.

No Catholic who is thus faithful will ever lack the confidence of his fellow citizens; nor will he ever be found second to the bravest in devotion to his country in the hour of her need.

Let us avoid bringing ridicule upon ourselves, by constantly prating and shouting about our patriotism; but let us strive to do faithfully and exactly what our Lord has told us to do: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and render to God the things that are God's."





TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE RAISING OF THE RULER'S DAUGHTER TO LIFE.

"We will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful, even as those who have no hope."—I. Thess. iv. 12.

Exordium.—To-day's Gospel furnishes two more instances of our Lord's tender compassion for human misfortune or sorrow, and of His readiness to relieve it, whenever appealed to in a spirit of faith.

May remark in passing, that the poor woman in whose favor the first miracle was wrought is a striking example of those who apply to our Lord only when all human means have failed. "She had suffered many things from many physicians," St. Mark tells us (v. 26), "and had spent all she had, and was nothing better, but rather worse."

The second miracle, the raising of the young girl to life, teaches a twofold lesson: I. The consolation which faith always gives, in the hour of death, not only to the dying, but also to those who mourn. II. The increased bitterness, and at the same time the unbecomingness and even *irreverence* of immoderate grief for the dead.

I. This miracle bears a close and striking resemblance to that of the raising of the widow's son to life.

Yet each has its distinguishing circumstances, suggestive of a particular lesson, and revealing to us a different phase of the inexhaustible love and sympathy of our divine Saviour.

In the case of the widow's son, no message was sent to our Lord. The father was dead; the poor, lone mother could not leave the

bedside of her dying, only child. He is dead. The wail of grief and lamentation is allowed to go unrestrained. The crushed, heart-broken mother heeds it not. The usual time—not many hours, but long and agonizing—of this weird tribute to the dead, has elapsed, and the funeral procession is well on its way to the tomb before our Lord appears. He comes, unbidden, and compassionate; and the poor widowed mother's tears are wiped away.

In to-day's miracle, the beauty of the sad scene is enhanced by the noble figure of the virtuous, God-fearing father. We may justly call him a *Christian father*. His conduct, and his faith in our divine Saviour, deserve for him that title: he leaves the bedside of his dying child—his beautiful little daughter, the light and joy of his home, the idol of his heart—leaves her as each breath seems about to be her last—to go in search of the *Physician of Souls*. Before he can speak to Him, he is overtaken by messengers who tell him it is *too late*: his child is dead. But his faith tells him it is *not too late*: "Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live."

No one may dare fathom the depths of a parent's anguish on the death of a child. Yet from observation it would seem that nothing else brings such mute, overwhelming, dazing sorrow to the heart of a father, as the death of a fair and gentle daughter.

Such was the sturdy ruler's sorrow. But his faith failed not. Beautiful scene around the little virgin's lifeless form: "He suffered not any man to go in with Him," says St. Luke (viii. 51), "but Peter, and James, and John, and *the father and mother* of the maiden." Two virtuous souls. Unable indeed to stifle entirely the sobs that well up from their bleeding hearts; but their faith in our Lord—their *Christian faith*—subdues all unseemly expression of their grief. One gentle word carries the balm of consolation to

their hearts, and the placid radiance of divine hope dries up their tears: *Weep not*. Their reward is prompt and exceeding great.

II. Striking contrast between the conduct of the parents, and that of the crowd whom our Lord drove out of the house.

Some probably only *hired* "mourners" (cf. Edersheim, *Life of Christ*, I. 360)—there according to the custom of the time and country. The majority, no doubt, came as "sympathizing friends." But were evidently "ignorant concerning them that are asleep," were "sorrowful even as those who have no hope."

Saw only the work of the fatal shaft; the closed eyes; the lifeless clay; the impending corruption of the tomb. No thought of the overruling providence of God; of His goodness; His mercy; His love. No thought of the life to come. Only of the present bereavement, disappointment, separation. No thought, apparently, of the happiness, peace, and rest of the just soul that has winged its flight to the realms of Eternal Light. They understand not the words of our divine Saviour: "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth"; and "they laugh him to scorn."

Such the sorrow of the godless, the irreligious. Sorrow without mitigation, without faith or hope. They will not accept the inevitable. Try to forget or ignore it. When it overtakes them, they see not the hand of a merciful God—a loving Father, but only the hideous spectre of a heartless, irresistible foe, and give themselves up in helpless despair.

III. How beautiful and consoling the Christian idea of death: "The maid is *not dead*, but *sleepeth*." Even though the body may not be raised to life again, the pure, sinless soul never dies.

Consoling to think of a beautiful soul being received by our blessed Lord, and restored to her Eternal Father.

All that faith and hope teach us in regard to the future life finds

its highest realization in the happiness of those who are called away in the flower of youth—innocent and pure. “These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Apoc. xiv. 4).

Conclusion.—How parents should act when God in His wisdom sees fit to take their children in early life. Imitate the ruler, in having recourse to our Lord. Strive to take the true Christian view of death. It is not annihilation; not the marring of one's destiny. Not the *end*, but the *beginning* of *true life*. In Christian language there is in reality no such word as *death* for the just. They do not *die*, but *sleep in the Lord*. This Christian view will prevent all immoderate, fruitless, hopeless sorrow.

Thanks to our blessed Lord for the consolation and hope given us in to-day's miracle. Remember His consoling words to the grief-stricken parents: “Weep not. The maid is not dead, but sleepeth.”

Console one another in these words; and you will not be sorrowful “as those who have no hope.”



TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

(GOSPEL OF THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.)

THE TRIUMPH OF THE GOSPEL.

“The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his field.”—Matt. xiii. 31.

Exordium.—St. Jerome (Homily. iii. Noct.) says that in to-day’s Gospel, the words *Kingdom of Heaven* mean the preaching of the Gospel, and the *familiar acquaintance with the Scriptures* (notitia Scripturarum) i. e., such a knowledge of them (acquired by hearing and reading) as will make them influence our daily lives.

It is of this kingdom, says the same holy doctor, that our Lord speaks, when He says to the Jews, “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof” (Matt. xxi. 43).

The parable has the usual characteristics of simplicity, and aptness—being perfectly adapted to the knowledge and intelligence of those to whom it was spoken. On the one hand the “grain of mustard-seed” was a proverbial term of comparison among the Jews, to indicate “something exceedingly minute.” Thus our Lord Himself says to His apostles, “If you had faith *like to a grain of mustard-seed*,” etc. (Luke xvii. 6).

On the other hand, mustard was not, in the East, merely a plant or herb, as with us, but really grew up into a tree, “greater than all herbs” (cf. Trench, *On the Parables*; also à Lapide in loco).

St. Jerome also tells us that *the man sowing the seed* represents *either* our Lord sowing the seed of the Gospel throughout the world

by the preaching of His apostles and their successors, *or* each faithful hearer, sowing the seed in good ground, in his own soul.

Hence the parable calls our attention to two important facts: I. The triumph of the Gospel over the world collectively. II. The triumph of the Gospel in each individual who follows faithfully its teaching and its maxims.

I. The triumph of the Gospel over the world:

It began in Jerusalem with the preaching of St. Peter (Acts ii. et seq.). Spread over all the countries of the East, by the heroic labors of the apostles: "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth; and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. x. 18). The knowledge of "The Unknown God" carried even to proud Athens, and Corinth, and Ephesus, by the apostle of the Gentiles.

Three centuries of unequal struggle with mighty Rome, and the final glorious triumph.

Triumph over the Western barbarians who had so often bid defiance to Caesar's legions. Apt comparisons often used in reference to this bloodless conflict: The savage hordes compared to a mighty ocean-billow spending its force against the immovable *Rock*, and recoiling, passive and subdued, as the ebbing tide. Or to the ferocious lion changed into a gentle lamb under the wand-like influence of the venerable Shepherd's staff. Triumph in civilizing the various war-like tribes and causing Christian peace and harmony to reign in place of constant war and endless bloodshed. This triumph clearly predicted long centuries before the coming of the King of Peace: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion and the sheep shall abide together; and *a little Child shall lead them*" (Isa. xi. 6).

All this did not follow immediately upon the birth of our Lord; nor even during His life upon earth; but was accomplished by *the*

preaching of His word: "Jesus Christ, yesterday and to-day, and the same forever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

Finally the triumph of the Gospel among civilized nations. Giving the true standard of morality. Teaching man to respect the rights of his fellow-man. Speaking with authority to kings and princes; to the rulers and to those ruled; to rich and to poor—reminding all alike of the sovereign dominion of God, who shall judge every man and "render to him according to his works" (Rom. ii. 6).

In this influence of the Gospel upon mankind, no one can fail to see the aptness of the parable of the mustard-seed: "Which is the least indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up, is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof."

II. The triumph of the Gospel in each individual who faithfully follows its teaching and its maxims.

A man's real strength is proportionate to the correctness and nobleness of his *moral principles*, and to his fidelity and consistency in living up to them.

Needless to say that *the highest moral principles* are contained in the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and especially in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us *by His Son*, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the world" (Heb. i. 1, 2).

Nothing in the writings of the sages and philosophers of any age can compare with the teaching of eternal truth. Our Lord's teaching is *complete*. It defines the whole duty of man on earth, and points out infallibly the road to eternal life and happiness: "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*" (John xiv. 6).

He lays down the two great commandments: Love of God, first and above all things; and the love of neighbor as one's self (Matt. xxii. 37, 39). The law of forgiveness of injuries: "Love *even* your enemies: do good to them that hate you" (Luke vii. 27). The law of charity and generosity, with the reward of its observance: "Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom" (Luke vi. 38).

Tells us who will be truly happy—who will possess the kingdom of heaven (Matt. v.—The Beatitudes).

Warns us against over solicitude about the goods of this world: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice" (Matt. vi. 33). "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26).

Bids us have courage in face of temptations and persecutions: "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul into hell" (Matt. x. 28). Finally He gives the plain rule of our conduct toward God and country: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21).

The triumph of this sublime teaching in individual souls: Virtue implanted in youth. Moral integrity in manhood. Purity in womanhood. Piety in the family. Charity, Christian patience, and fortitude—alike in prosperity and in adversity. Honor, honesty, and all civic virtues. No social scandals, no outrages upon public decency—no suicides.

Absolutely undeniable that no other teaching but that of the Gospel has ever produced such results, or could produce them.

III. What the Catholic Church has done and suffered to preserve this Gospel teaching: Her jealous and faithful guardianship of the



sacred word of God. Her struggle against errors, calumnies, and persecutions. Her defense of civil liberty, and her loyalty to legitimate authority of every form. Her boundless charity for the poor, the ignorant, and the suffering.

For eloquent summary of her championship of truth, see Archbishop Ryan's well-known lecture, "*What Catholics do not Believe.*"

Conclusion.—Thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for His admirable teaching. Thanks for His having made the seed of His word spring up into the magnificent tree of his Visible Church. Thanks for having allowed us to find shelter in the branches of that *Tree*. Prayer that the seed may fall upon good ground in our souls, and bring forth fruit a hundredfold.

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD.

"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty."—Matt. xxiv. 30.

Exordium.—Remarkable impressiveness and mysterious solemnity of the discourse of our Lord contained in to-day's Gospel. The occasion, that of His last visit to the temple in Jerusalem, only three days before His Passion (Matt. xxvi. 1, 2).

The place, the Mount of Olives, with the city, Gethsemani and Calvary, all in view (cf. Fouard's Christ, ii. 202; Maclear N. T. Class Book, 275. Also interesting details and digressions in Edersheim, Life of Jesus, ii. ch. vi.).

His labors and teaching are at an end. The terrible tragedy of the Atonement is impending; but to this He makes no allusion.

Speaks of another, not far off: The destruction of Jerusalem with its attendant horrors (Jos. B. J., bk. vi. ch. iii. 3, 4; ch. ix.).

Speaks also of His rejection by the Jewish people misled by "false Christs and false prophets." Of the heretics and false teachers who would oppose the work of His apostles and their successors (cf. à Lapide in loco). Then He speaks of the destruction of the world; and lastly, of His own second coming, "in power and majesty," preceded by His "sign in heaven."

The first three of these predictions have been literally fulfilled. As to the time of the destruction of the world, "Of that day and hour, no one knoweth; no, not even the angels of heaven, but the Father *alone*" (Matt. xxiv. 36. Cf. à Lapide, vel Kenrick, in loco).

Whenever it comes, it will be immediately followed by the coming of our Lord "in power and majesty."

We shall all be witnesses of this closing scene: "He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together His *elect* from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them." *The wicked* shall also be there: "All nations shall be gathered together before him; and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats" (Matt. xxv. 32).

Most appropriate that we should meditate upon this closing scene in the world's drama, on this, the last day of the Liturgical Year.

I. "Then shall the sign of the Son of Man appear in heaven."

All commentators and spiritual writers agree that this *sign* is none other than *the cross*. "This cross will appear in heaven when the Lord will come to judge" (Imitat. bk. ii. ch. 12).

Many reasons why it should: It was the chosen instrument of His suffering, whereby He wrought our redemption: "Having joy set before him, he endured the cross—despising the shame."

It was to the cross that He fastened "the handwriting of the decree that was against us" (Col. ii. 14).

It was His constant burden from the manger in Bethlehem to the hill of Calvary.

It traces *the only way* to eternal life: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and *take up his cross* and follow me (Matt. xvi. 24. "Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below than *the way of the holy cross*" (Imitat. bk. ii. ch. 12).

Yet He was condemned to the cross as to an instrument of cruelest torture and blackest infamy.

It has always been an object of contempt and aversion to many.

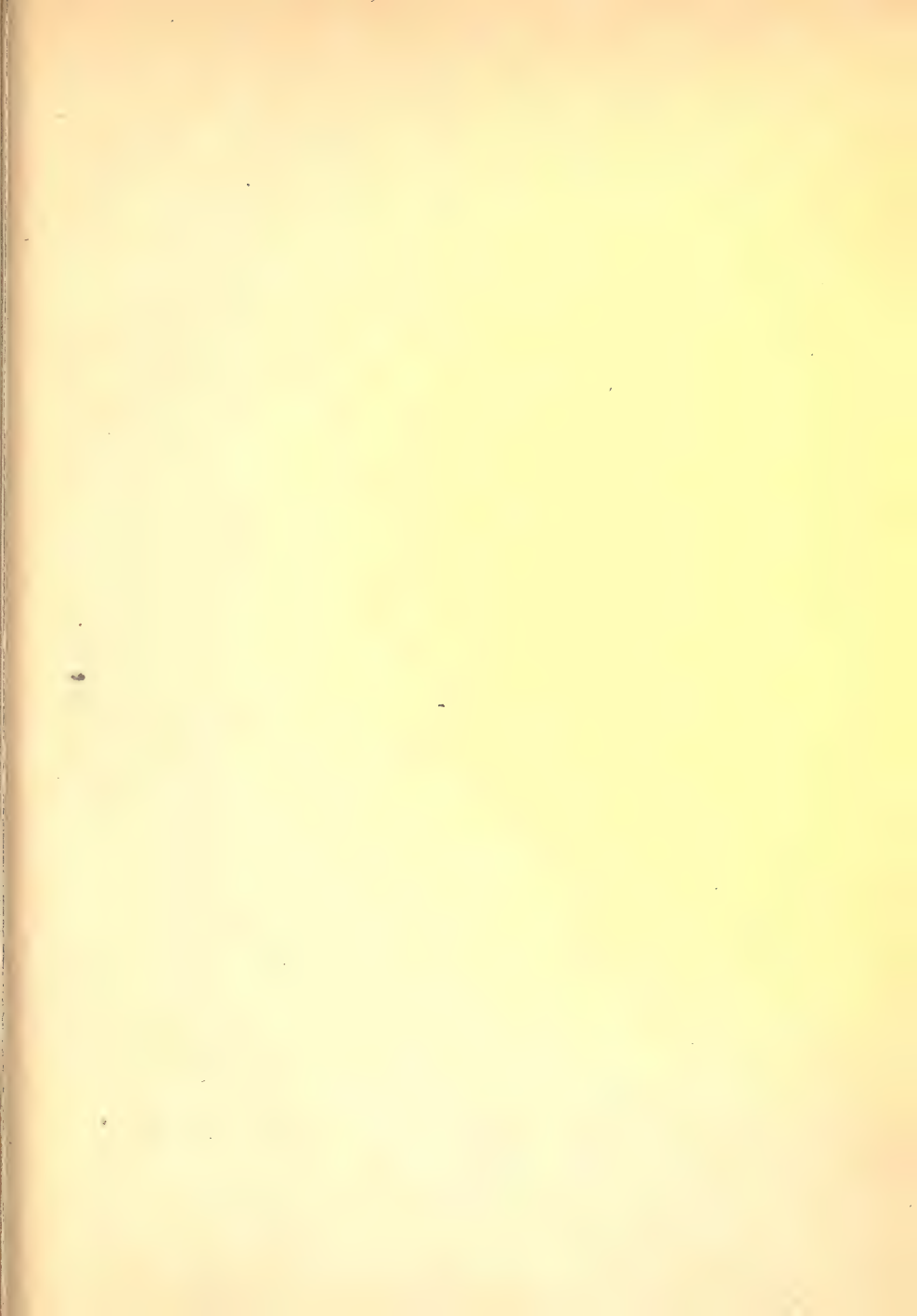
To these it will be a vision of terror and despair when it appears as the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. "Then will they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us" (Luke xxiii. 30). A blessed vision of joy and confidence to those who have followed the example of the divine Master.

II. "And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven *with much power and majesty.*"

Contrast between the first and the second coming: The poverty of the manger. The lowliness of the cottage at Nazareth. Recognized only as the illiterate Son of the carpenter. Ridiculed, contradicted, insulted, calumniated. His steps dogged by haughty, evil-minded hypocrites, bent on destroying His work. He sowing the good seed; they sowing the tares. Emboldened by His meekness, and urged on by *the father of lies*, they lay violent hands upon Him. Bring false witnesses to testify against Him. Clothe Him in all the mock habiliments of a King. Blindfold and buffet Him—think to blind Him with a rag, and ask Him if He can see who it was that struck Him. Finally the outrages of the sorrowful way of the cross. His appearance on Calvary: "There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness. . . . Despised and the most abject of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity" (Isa. liii. 2, 3). "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John i. 17).

His second coming—ere the din and terror of the perishing world have ceased. Foreshadowed by clouds more ominous than those which obscured the heavens at the moment of His death. Heralded by the angel's trumpet, awakening and summoning the dead. Revealed by the flashing lightning. Surrounded by the legions of angels who would have obeyed His call in the garden of Olives (Matt. xxvi. 53).

Needs not now the dove-like presence of the Holy Ghost, nor the



voice of the Father, nor the company of Moses and Elias, to identify Him, as at His Baptism, and His Transfiguration (Matt. iii. 16, 17; xvii. 3, 5). All His enemies and revilers will be there. Not only those who persecuted Him while He was on earth, but all their imitators to the end of time. Those who have refused to hear His voice. Those who have repeatedly refused or abused His graces—who have been “enemies of His cross.”

The cross there, blazoned forth in the heavens. No longer holding the mangled form of the expiring Victim. But containing the record of all that *He* had done *for man*; and all that *man* had done *for* or *against* Him.

Conclusion.—Exhortation to gaze earnestly and intently upon this scene—terrible for evil-doers; consoling for the just: “Then all the servants of the cross, who in their lifetime have conformed themselves to Him that was crucified, shall come to Christ with great confidence” (Imitat. bk. ii. ch. 12).

Many times during the course of the year, the words of our Lord have instructed us in the way of truth—have given us encouragement, hope, and consolation.

To-day He Himself tells us what will be the end of it all; and bids us bear it well in mind. For “this generation (i. e., the human race: cf. à Lapide) shall not pass till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass.”

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE FIRST AND THE LAST COMING OF CHRIST.

“Then they shall see the son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty.”—Luke xxi. 27.

Exordium.—Advent*—*the coming.* Preparation for the commemoration of the birth of our Lord. Most proper that the event should be commemorated. What the world does for its heroes and benefactors.

How the Church wishes us to prepare:

1. By prayer and earnest longings—as the prophets and all the just of old. The *Rorate* (Isa. xlv. 8).

2. By “casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light” (Rom. xiii. 12). Preparing and waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom—as the wise Virgins did (Matt. xxv. 1-3).

Reminded of the last coming, in order to force us to prepare for the first.

Spiritual writers speak of *three* comings: 1. In the beautiful mystery of the nativity. 2. By grace, into the soul. 3. “In power and majesty,” to judge the world.

To-day we shall consider the First and the Last.

I. In His First Coming.

He came in obedience to the will of His Eternal Father. “Then I said: Behold I come to do thy will, O God” (Heb. x. 9).

He came in weakness and lowliness: “He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (Phil. ii. 7).

* See Liturgical Year, Dom Guéranger, Advent.

He came as mediator and Redeemer—to give “Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace to men of good will” (Luke ii. 14).

“Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us. And fastening it to the cross” (Col. ii. 14).

He came to offer a fitting sacrifice to His Eternal Father: “Holo-causts for sin did not please thee: Then I said, Behold I come” (Heb. x. 6). Its acceptance had been foretold: “My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name *a clean oblation*, saith the Lord of Hosts” (Mal. i. 11).

He came to suffer for us: “Having joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. xii. 2).

But in His First Coming, He was rejected by the world: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John i. 11).

The world sat in judgment upon Him. Declared Him to be an impostor. Accused Him of being in league with the devil (Luke xi. 15). Of being a public malefactor and blasphemer (Luke xxiii. 2). Preferred a robber and murderer to Him: “Not this man, but Barabbas” (John xviii. 40). “I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people” (Ps. xxi. 7).

Condemned Him to the most barbarous torments, and ignominious death: “They have dug my hands and my feet. They have numbered all my bones” (Ibid. vs. 17, 18). “O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow” (Lam. i. 12).

Dies upon the cross between two thieves, and amid the deafening shouts of the rabble that covered the hill of Calvary.

Such the end of His First Coming—which began in gentleness, peace, and love.

II. Mark the difference in His Last Coming:

He will come "with great power and majesty." To judge the world. Not to be judged by it. Not in weakness and lowliness. Not as mediator. Not as victim of propitiation. Not to appease the anger of His Father. But as JUDGE.

He will come *with* the cross, but not *upon* it.

Then will the words of holy Simeon be emblazoned in the sight of all: "This child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel" (Luke ii. 34).

He will "search Jerusalem with lamps" (Soph. i. 12).

He will judge the world by the Law, which He fulfilled; by the Gospel, which He announced; by the teachings of those whom He sent; by the Church which He established; *by the* CROSS upon which He died.

Mercy at an end. Justice meted out with "weight and balance" (Prov. xvi. 11). Then "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves. Men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved" (Luke xxi. 25, 26).

"Then shall the just stand with great constancy;" but the wicked, "seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. We have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us" (Wis. v. 1-4, 6).

The passing of the two sentences (Matt. xxv. 34, 41).

The closing of the Book for all Eternity.





Conclusion.—Be grateful for the Advent warning. Make good use of it. Prepare well for the *First Coming*, by “casting off the works of darkness, and putting on the armour of light” (Rom. xiii. 12). Try to prepare also for the Last Coming. Remember “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. xiv. 10), in that dread day when He shall come “in a cloud with power and majesty.”

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

CHRIST THE MESSIAH.

“Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another?”—Matt. xi. 3.

Exordium.—Three facts clearly set before us in to-day’s Gospel:

1. John the Baptist believed our Lord to be the Messiah.
2. Our Lord gives proof that He is the promised Messiah.
3. John’s testimony should be accepted by the Jews.

I. John did not send his messengers because he doubted. On the contrary, because he was sure that they themselves would be convinced. (Cf. à Lapide, Maldonatus, or Kenrick, Matt. xi.)

John had frequently shown and proclaimed aloud his faith in our Lord, and the fact that He was the Messiah.

When our Lord came to be baptized in the Jordan: “I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?” (Matt. iii. 14).

When the Jews sent to him in the wilderness to ask if he were the Christ: “And he confessed, and did not deny; and he confessed: I am not the Christ. . . . But there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not. The same is he that shall come after me, who is preferred before me: the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose” (John i. 20, 26, 27).

Shortly after he proclaimed Him to the multitude (ibid. v. 29), and again (v. 35) to Andrew and John, to be “The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.”

Relating the incidents of the Baptism, he says: “And I saw, and I gave testimony, that this is the Son of God” (ibid. vs. 32-34).

When his own disciples complained that Jesus was baptizing, he once more proclaimed Him to be the Messiah (v. 34) and the Son of God (John iii. 25-35).

Finally, when languishing in prison, desiring that his devoted followers should believe as he believed, he sent two of them to ask: "Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another?"

II. Our Blessed Lord knew perfectly the mind of His faithful Precursor. Gives to the messengers abundant proofs that He is truly the Messiah. Works miracles in their presence: "And in that hour, he cured many of their diseases, and hurts, and evil spirits: and to many that were blind he gave sight" (Luke vii. 21).

They hear also from every mouth the recent wonders He had wrought: The raising of the widow's son to life, and the healing of the centurion's servant (Luke vii.). His numerous cures in Galilee (Mark iii. 1-12). The paralytic; the leper; the demoniac (John v. iv.).

They hear also of the new and wonderful truths preached in the sermon on the mount.

He knows that this is sufficient to convert them, and all who should hear their wonderful story: "Go, and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

Precisely the things that had been foretold of the Messiah: "Say to the faint-hearted: Take courage and fear not: God Himself will come, and will save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as the hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free" (Isa. xxxv. 4-6). "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me: he sent me to preach to the

meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up" (*ibid.* lxi. 1).

III. The two messengers go their way; and Jesus begins to speak "to the multitude concerning John."

No man stood higher in their esteem and veneration.

The whole country had gone out to him in the wilderness, "and were baptized by him, confessing their sins" (*Mark* i. 5).

He had publicly denounced the Pharisees and Sadducees: "Ye brood of vipers, who hath taught you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance" (*Matt.* iii. 7, 8). And they took their rebuke in silence.

The priests and ancients feared to say ought against him: "For all held John as a prophet" (*Matt.* xxi. 26).

From the beginning he had told them that "the kingdom of heaven was at hand." That he was nothing but "The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord" (*John* i. 23). That Jesus was "the Lamb of God;" "the Son of God." "He must increase, but I must decrease." (*John* iii. 30).

John was the sole, faithful, fearless witness, and champion of our Lord. Yet they knew he was not a blind enthusiast. Not a weak changeling—"a reed shaken by the wind."

His preaching, his conduct toward the Scribes and Pharisees, and toward the mighty Herod, proofs of this.

Was not "a man clothed in soft garments," but an austere hermit of the wilderness.

Was "more than a prophet." He is the divinely foretold Precursor of the Messiah. "This is he of whom it is written: Behold, I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee."

John was the greatest man then on earth. (Though not yet as





great as the least of the just already in heaven.—(Cf. à Lapide, Matt. xi. 9).

He was even “Elias that is to come,” i. e., he was already come “in the spirit and power” of the ancient prophet to convert his generation to Christ, as Elias was to come at the end of the world to bring the remnant of his people to God. (Item, à Lapide, in loco.)

All these things easily understood by the multitude. They could not reject the testimony of John. Should therefore believe that Christ was the Messiah.

Conclusion.—Appropriateness of the Gospel for this holy time of Advent. Wisdom and care of Holy Mother Church in giving us the word of God in season.

Effect of the lesson: Lively faith in our Blessed Messiah. More earnestness and fervor in preparing to commemorate His coming. Pray earnestly for those who have not yet received Him.

Heed the words of the Holy Precursor: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight his paths” (Luke iii. 4).

And the exhortation of the Great Apostle: “The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light” (Rom. xiii. 12).

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE LITTLENES AND THE GREATNESS OF MAN.

“Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?”—John i. 19, 22.

Exordium.—Time and circumstances of the incident related in the Gospel: Just after our Lord's fast and temptation in the desert—which event had been preceded by His baptism.

The fame of John the Baptist was at its height. Multitudes were flocking to hear him, in spite of the severity of his preaching. “Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance” (Matt. iii. 7, 8). “Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the country about Jordan. And were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins” (ibid. 5, 6).

All classes of people: Rich and poor; Pharisees and Sadducees (ibid. 7.) Publicans (tax-gatherers), and soldiers (Luke iii. 12, 14)—“all Judea.”

The minds of all were agitated by the great question of the coming of the Messiah. His time was at hand. The seventy weeks prophesied by Daniel (ix. 24) had about run their course.

Herod was ruling. The sceptre had passed from Juda (Gen. xlix. 10). No wonder that the Sanhedrin* should be aroused, and should send to inquire who the strange and extraordinary preacher was.

Were probably disappointed at the answer they received.

Doubtless did not realize the far-reaching import of their own questions.

As recorded in the inspired Word of God, these questions have a meaning for every human being.

* See Fouard I. 129.

Let us to-day apply them to ourselves individually.

"Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?"

The true answer will bring us face to face with *The Littleness and the Greatness of Man*.

I. The Littleness of Man (cf. à Lapide, John i. 19).

(a) In comparison with God: God the fulness of being. Infinite in every conceivable way. Existing *of* Himself, and *by* Himself—from all eternity and *for* all eternity. No beginning, no end. Needs no special name to designate Him. I AM WHO AM, is the title by which Moses was commanded to announce Him to Pharaoh (Exod. iii. 14).

Man, on the contrary, may truly say of himself *I am who am not*. Is nothing; has nothing, save what comes from God—what God *lends* him.

God, infinite power, wisdom, patience, goodness.

Man, the extreme of weakness, ignorance, misery, perversity.

(b) *In comparison with the universe*: One poor little atom. Utterly powerless to cope with the elements.

If left alone in midocean—in the desert—in the wilderness. If caught by flood, or fire, or raging storm.

Even among his fellow beings. As an individual, only *one among millions*. Would never be missed.

Among those millions, how many must each admit to be greater, more powerful than himself.

(c) *Man considered in himself—individually—without comparison*.

What is he here on earth? A rational creature indeed. Perhaps endowed with extraordinary intelligence, energy, judgment, shrewdness, power or influence over his fellow men.

The exercise of these gifts depends on the health of mind and

body. Reason may fail, or even life become extinct, at any moment. Man "cometh forth like a flower, and fleeth as a shadow" (Job xiv. 2).

The body, however seeming strong, has in it always the germ of decay, dissolution, death, corruption. "I have said to rottenness: Thou art my father: to worms, my mother and my sister" (Job xvii. 14).

Who art thou? What canst thou do?

Gain riches? Acquire knowledge, influence, power, authority over others?

How long will it last? Where are the millionaires of a generation ago? Where will those of to-day be a generation hence? Their epitaph: *Naked I came into this world; naked have I left it.*

What of the patriots, heroes, statesmen, savants of all the ages past? What of the poor, the lowly, and the ignorant?

"I am a mortal man like all others. All have one entrance into the world, and the like going out" (Wis. vii. 1, 6).

"We are but of yesterday, and are ignorant that our days are . . . but a shadow" (Job viii. 9).

Alas for the littleness of man! "What is man that thou dost magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?" (Job vii. 17).

Even in the midst of his greatness and prosperity he may be cut off "more swiftly than the web is cut by the weaver" (ibid. v. 6).

II. *The greatness of man:*

There must be a greatness in man since God "sets His heart upon him."

Great in his creation—made *to the image and likeness of God* (Gen. i. 26, 27). Made lord and master of all the earth and the living creatures thereon (Gen. i. 26). "Thou hast made him a





little less than the angels: thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, and hast set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet" (Ps. viii. 6-8).

Great in the love which God has manifested for him.

"God so loved the world (i. e., man) as to give his only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have *life everlasting*" (John iii. 16).

Great on account of His destiny: To see God "face to face." To know "even as I am known" (I. Cor. xiii. 12). To live forever, without sorrow or suffering: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4). To have all that heart can desire: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (I. Cor. ii. 9).

Conclusion.—Each one may now answer the questions:

Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?

As far as this world alone is concerned, *nothing*, an atom, a shadow, "a voice crying in the wilderness."

As regards the next world. "*Sons of God*. And if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. viii. 16, 17).

Exhortation.—Strive to attain to this great inheritance. Be mindful of the true dignity of a Christian.

Heed the admonition of St. Paul: "We are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live" (Rom. viii. 12, 13).

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS.

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”—Luke iii. 4.

Exordium.—To-day, the last Sunday of Advent, Holy Mother Church makes a final appeal to her children, and to all who are willing to hear her voice, to exert themselves, and do their part to secure the blessings brought by our Divine Saviour in the mystery of His Nativity.

Reminds us of how John the Baptist went about among the people “preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins.”

Gives us the very words which he used—because they apply equally well to us at the present day.

I. Explain the twofold meaning of these words of the Gospel (Luke iii. 4-6). II. Show what must be done in order to properly “prepare the way of the Lord.”

I. The words of St. John from “the book of sayings of Isaias” (xl. 3-5) were a prophecy referring primarily to the liberation of the Jewish captives of Babylon, by King Cyrus, and to the facilities he would grant them for returning to their own country (cf. Maldonatus and Kenrick, Luke iii.; à Lapide, *ibid.* et in Is. xl. 3).

Same prophecy more clearly repeated at a later date by Baruch: “For they went out from thee on foot, led by the enemies; but the Lord will bring them to thee exalted with honor, as children of the kingdom. For God hath appointed to bring down every high

mountain, and the everlasting rocks, and to fill up the valleys, to make them even with the ground: that Israel may walk diligently to the honor of God" (v. 7).

These prophecies virtually, if not literally, fulfilled by the edict of Cyrus (Josephus, *Ant. Bk. xi., ch. i. 3*).

Beautiful symbolical meaning: Goodness and bounty of God in making easy the way for those who are willing to return to Him.

The result also symbolical of man's neglect of God's favors. Comparatively few of the Jews availed themselves of the King's munificent offer. (Gigot, *Jewish Hist.*, 311.) Estimated that six out of seven preferred to remain in exile. (Smith, *Bib. Dict.*, Vol. I., 385.)

But the words of the prophet have a more direct and emphatic reference to the bringing back of the human race from the bondage of sin. (*Ita Auctores supra citati.*)

May be understood as a denunciation of God's judgment against the proud; and as a promise that He will exalt the humble, and will by His grace remove all obstacles from the hearts of those who are willing to hearken to His words. (*Sic SS. Greg., Augus., Chrysos., Beda, et alii, apud à Lapide.*)

Or as a command or exhortation to all, to "prepare the way" by their own efforts. (*Sic ipse à Lapide, in Luc. iii. 5.*)

This latter interpretation seems more in harmony with the preaching of St. John.

II. How to "prepare the way of the Lord."

(a) "Make straight his paths." Remove all obstacles to the entrance of divine grace into the soul.

Lack of sincere love of God. Deliberate violation of the commandments. Living in a state of sin. Hatred; selfishness; hard-heartedness; intemperance, etc.

"If any one love me, . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23).

"Know you this, and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. v. 5).

"He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?" (I. John iii. 17).

(b) Fill up the valleys—of slothfulness; neglect of religious duties; weakness in time of temptation; infidelity to resolutions of amendment of life; long absence from the sacraments. "The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns; the way of the just is without hindrance" (Prov. xv. 19).

(c) Level the hills—of pride; self-sufficiency; false security; neglect and resistance of divine grace. "I hate arrogance, and pride, and every wicked way, and a mouth with a double tongue" (Prov. viii. 13).

(d) Make the crooked ways straight: Put aside all deception, hypocrisy, dishonesty, double-dealing. "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: he that followeth justice is beloved by him" (Prov. xv. 9).

III. *Exhortation*.—Prepare for Christmas as true Christians. "Bring forth fruits worthy of penance. For now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire" (Luke iii. 8, 9). "Put off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Walk honestly as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, . . . and impurities: not in contentions and envy" (Rom. xiii. 12, 13).





Have no part in the sinful excesses in which so many, unfortunately, indulge at this holy time.

Satan always has his votaries and his victims at Christmas. Vice stalks abroad with unwonted boldness—apparently in defiance of the helpless Babe of Bethlehem.

During the very advent of the God of Love—the Saviour of the world—while the angels are proclaiming “Peace on earth to men of good will”—thousands of souls will be dragged headlong into hell. Such the sad story of every Christmastide.

Let it not be so with you and yours. Heed the warning of the holy Precursor. “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight his paths.” Then, in very deed, “All flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS.

THE WARNING.

“Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted.”—Luke ii. 34.

Exordium.—May seem strange that so sad a note should be struck in the midst of the Christmas joys—before the sound of the angels’ voices has died away.

It is a salutary note of *warning*, sounded opportunely by our ever-watchful Mother Church.

Christ came indeed to bring salvation to all men. His Eternal Father was willing that all should be saved through Him: “God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting” (John iii. 16).

But God knew, and our Divine Saviour knew, that all would not believe in Him; and that many would contradict Him.

I. Would be rejected.

(a) By the Jews, His chosen people: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John i. 11).

Rejected at His birth. Laid in a manger. “Because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke ii. 7).

Rejected after all the proofs He had given of His Divinity, by His teaching, by His miracles; in spite of the testimony of the Scriptures, of John the Baptist, and of God the Father Himself (Luke iii. 22). “Not this man, but Barabbas. . . . We have no King but Caesar” (John xviii. 40; xix. 15).

Rejected Him even after His resurrection.

“Ye princes of the people, and ancients, hear: Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by him this man standeth before you whole. This is the stone which was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved” (Acts iv. 8, 10-12).

Still the greater number rejected Him; and have continued to reject Him to this day.

(b) By many among the Gentiles of all ages.

By the ancient Greeks and Romans—slaves to their vices and their idolatry; and vain in their own conceits: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies among themselves” (Rom. i. 22-24).

These refused to believe in Him, and for centuries used all the power of earth in a vain attempt to blot out the very *name* of Christian. “Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against his Christ” (Ps. ii. 1, 2).

(c) In all ages, even unto the present day, the Divinity of Christ has been denied, and His teachings rejected.

Of all such it is written: “He that doth not believe is already judged; because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment: because the light is come

into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil" (John iii. 18, 19).

Hence the words of Holy Simeon: "This child is set for the fall of many."

II. "And for a sign that shall be contradicted."

Contradicted: (a) By those who utterly reject Him, and refuse to believe in Him. (b) By the votaries of the world: slaves of fashion, luxury, and greed of worldly gain. (c) By false teachers—"blind, and leaders of the blind" (Matt. xv. 14). (d) By those who refuse to hear and be led by His authorized ministers: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me" (Luke x. 16).

(e) Lastly, even by many who, professing to be of the household of the faith, are, as St. Paul says, "Enemies of the cross of Christ." Who neglect their religious duties; refuse the oft-repeated invitation to come to the banquet; or who enter without "the wedding garment" (Matt. xxii, 3, 11).

For these "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," says our Lord, "when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke xiii. 28).

III. *Exhortation.*—Heed the timely warning. Be not of the number of those who reject; nor of those who contradict.

Our Blessed Lord wishes to save all. "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men" (Titus ii. 11.) "As many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name" (John i. 12).

"He that believeth in him is not judged. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light" (John iii. 18, 21).

"There shall come from the east and the west, and the north and



the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke xiii. 29).

Our loving Saviour weeps over the blindness of sinners: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes" (Luke xix. 42). "How often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings—and thou wouldst not" (Matt. xxiii. 37).

Courage, therefore, and hope. Remembering that He came to bring "Peace to men of good will;" and that He "Is set for the resurrection of many in Israel."

FEAST OF THE ASCENSION.

THE GLORY AND BLESSINGS OF CHRIST'S TRIUMPH.

"Ascending on high, he led captivity captive: he gave gifts to men."—Eph. iv. 8.

Exordium.—To-day's mystery brings to a most fitting close the life of our Blessed Lord on earth. It began in weakness, lowliness, and poverty. Thirty years of it were passed in humble obscurity and self-denial. The last three years were marked by prodigies such as the world had not seen before nor has ever witnessed since. By contradictions, outrages, sufferings, far beyond human endurance. Finally, our Blessed Saviour, of His own accord, laid down that life and took it up again in astounding power and splendor.

After remaining long enough on earth to establish the fact of His resurrection beyond all reasonable doubt, and to confirm His disciples in His teachings, He again, by His divine power, betakes Himself back to the realms of ETERNAL LIGHT. "He hath set his tabernacle in the sun; and as a bridegroom coming out of his bride-chamber, he hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way" (Ps. xviii. 6). (Cf. à Lapide in Titulum et Argumentum Psalmi.)

This departure beautifully expressed in the words of the text.

I. Our Lord achieved a glorious triumph.

Condition of the human race. Consequences of the fall of man. Loss of many natural gifts; of original justice and intelligence; of supremacy over creation; of the enjoyment of the

fruits of the earth: "Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof, all the days of thy life" (Gen. iii. 17).

The loss of the friendship of God, and the punishment of death: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (ibid. 19).

The corruption of the race. The bondage of sin. Repeated offenses and repeated punishments. Increasing degradation.

Forcibly expressed in the lamentation of the prophet over Jerusalem: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is the mistress of nations become as a widow! Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore is she become vagabond: all they that honored her have despised her; because they have seen her shame" (Jer. Lam., i. 1, 8).

Our Lord triumphed over all these evils. Repaired the defects in man's intelligence by teaching him a higher and better law.

Triumphed over the miseries and evils of this life by teaching man to despise them, or to bear them patiently—"looking unto the reward" (Heb. xi. 26).

Triumphed over sin by vanquishing the devil and appeasing the anger of God: "Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us—fastening it to the cross" (Col. ii. 14).

Triumphed over death by His own death and resurrection—purchasing for us the same glorious privilege. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruit of them that sleep. For by a man came death; and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (I. Cor. xv. 19-22).

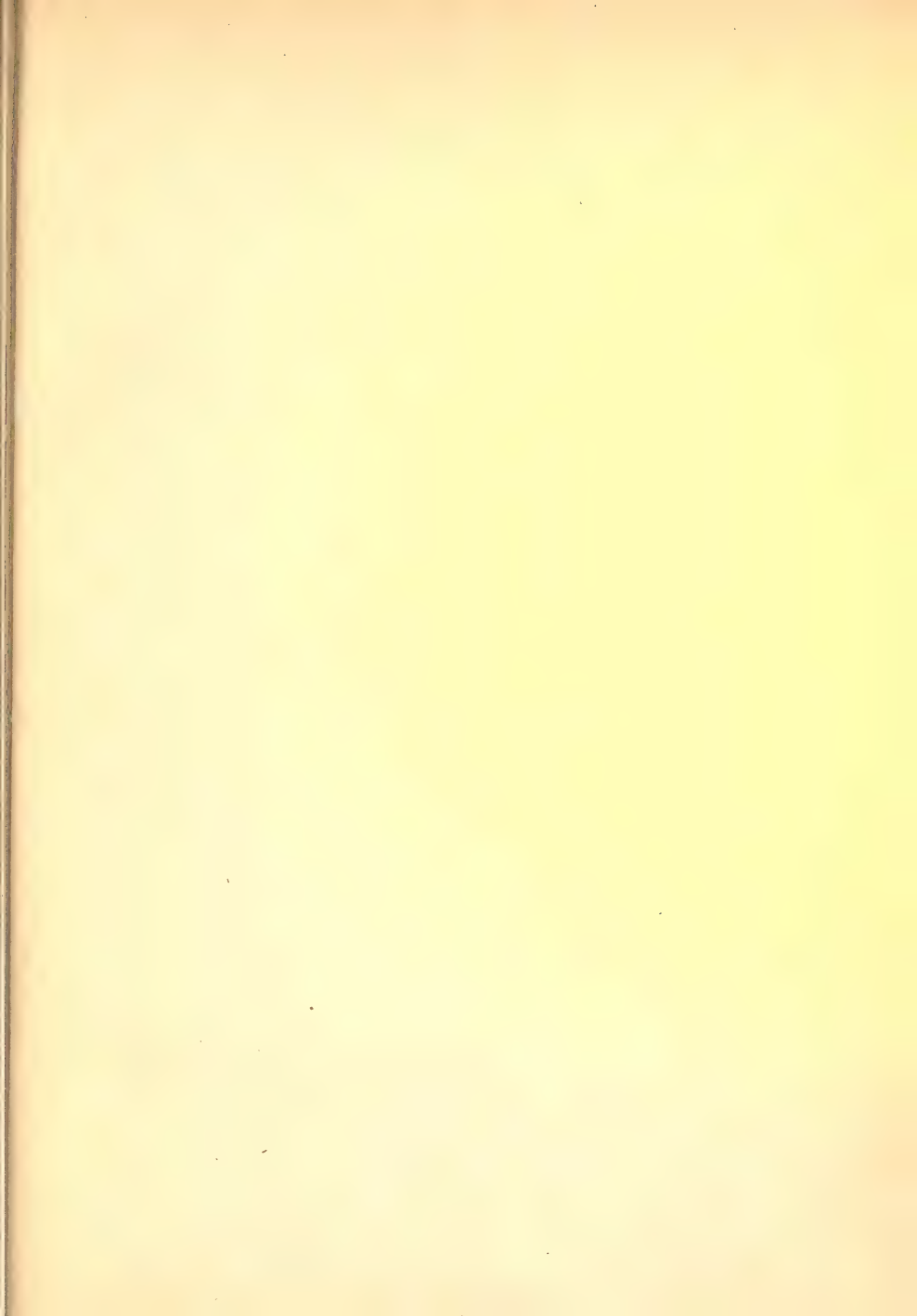
II. Having achieved His triumph, He "ascends on high, leading captivity captive." Breaks the bonds of those who, having been saved by faith in Him, await His coming, through all the ages. Opens the gates of heaven, and enters in, followed by the ransomed captives: Abel, the Just; Abraham, the man of Faith, and the Friend of God; all the patriarchs, priests, and prophets, down to Holy Simeon, and the good St. Joseph; and lastly, by that vast multitude of faithful, Godfearing souls of whom St. Paul says: "Time would fail me to tell, who by Faith conquered Kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained the promises" (Heb. xi. 32, 33).

This triumphal entry foretold by the Royal Prophet: "This is the generation of them that seek him; of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob. Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in" (Ps. xxiii. 6, 7). (Cf. à Lapide, in loco.)

III. Our Lord's triumph includes more than the act of our Redemption; the reparation of the sin of Adam; and the opening of the gates of heaven to man.

Other and very great blessings included in it: "He gave gifts to men." The means whereby we may derive full profit from the Redemption. Founded His Church: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). Established His priesthood: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John xx. 22, 23). Gave them the commission to preach and to teach (Mark xvi. 15). Left with us "the Bread of Eternal Life"—His own most sacred Body and Blood, in the Sacrament of His Love.

Finally, He sent the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, to teach us all truth, and to remain with us forever (John xiv. 16; Acts ii. 1-4).



Well might our Blessed Lord ask, "What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Isa. v. 4).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to appreciate and rejoice in this great mystery. Wonderful, beautiful, joyful, consoling.

The last in the greatest series of events in the history of mankind. No triumph comparable to this of our Lord. No victor ever returned with such an array of ransomed captives. No captives ever followed so cheerfully their rescuer. No conqueror ever brought back such rich spoils—such inexhaustible treasures—nor distributed them with such a lavish hand.

Deep and lasting gratitude. Be always mindful of these inestimable blessings, so briefly and beautifully enumerated by St. Paul: "Ascending on high, he led captivity captive: he gave gifts to men."

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION.*

Mary is assumed into heaven: the angels rejoice, and singing her praises, bless the Lord."—Offertory.

Exordium.—Words used by our Holy Mother Church in honoring Mary to-day.

What is meant by the Assumption?

"Not an *Article of Faith*, because it has not been *defined* by the Church, nor does there seem to be any clear reference to it in Holy Scripture. Nevertheless it would be the height of rashness to deny it" (Benedict XIV. *infra citatus*).

The belief is founded 1. On a pious tradition going back to the early centuries of Christianity. 2. On the sanction of the Church. 3. On reasons drawn from other facts that *are* Articles of Faith.

I. The legend briefly stated is that some time after our Lord's Ascension—probably about A. D. 46 (Spalding)—our Blessed Mother died, and was buried by the apostles; and that when they visited her tomb, three days later, they found it empty.

There is no strictly historical record of either the time of her death or the place of her burial.

We know that our Lord when expiring on the cross commended her to the care of His *beloved disciple*, St. John, and that the latter "From that hour took her to *his home*" (John xix. 27. Cf. Kenrick *et à Lapide*, in loco).

It is regarded as certain that St. John died at Ephesus (St. Jerome, *de Scriptoribus Ecclis.*). But whether he made his home there *before* or *after* the death of the Blessed Virgin is unknown.

* See "Feast of the Assumption," Archbishop M. J. Spalding, *Miscellanea*, Vol. ii., p. 736. Hurter, *Theol. Dogm.*, Tract. vii., Thes. clxvi.; Gaume, *iv.*, p. 476; Benedict XIV., *De Festis B. M. V.*, Cap. viii.

The fact that St. Paul consecrated Timothy Bishop of Ephesus some thirty years after the death of our Lord, gives strength to the opinion that St. John was still in Jerusalem at that time—which would be *after* the date assigned for the death of our Blessed Mother (Spalding).

Hence the more common and, perhaps, more probable belief, that she died in Jerusalem, and was buried at the foot of Mt. Olivet, where her tomb was still to be seen as late as the middle of the eighth century (Item Spalding).

These facts tend to confirm somewhat the tradition, not in itself unreasonable.

II. The belief in the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin was common in both the Greek and the Latin Church as early as the sixth century. Evidence of its previous existence witnessed by writers of an earlier date (*Sic singuli Auctores citati*).

The Feast itself had been celebrated before the close of the fifth century (Sacramentary of St. Gelasius I., apud Benedict, *De Festis*).

Was made a holiday of *obligation* by Urban VIII in 1642 (*De Mentor, Lives of the Popes, Vol. II., 288*).

In the Vatican Council, more than two hundred of the fathers there assembled earnestly petitioned that it should be declared an *Article of Faith* (Hurter).

For this constant belief, and its emphatic sanction by the Church, there must be reasons sufficiently solid to refute any possible charge of ignorance, superstition, or error.

III. These reasons are all founded on undeniable relation of our Blessed Mother to our Divine Saviour.

Several heresies in the early centuries of the Church concerning this relation: Was our Saviour truly *God*, or only *man*? If true God, did He really become *incarnate*? Was He both *true God* and

true man? If both, were His two natures united in *one person?* These questions were clearly settled by successive Councils; and in the Council of Ephesus, A. D. 431, Mary was solemnly declared to be MOTHER OF GOD—Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, *True God*, and *True Man*.

Next arose the question of her *worthiness* to sustain this intimate, this sublime relation to our Divine Saviour, God of infinite Sanctity. Was she, or was she not, like the rest of mortals, subject to the law and the taint of *Original Sin?*

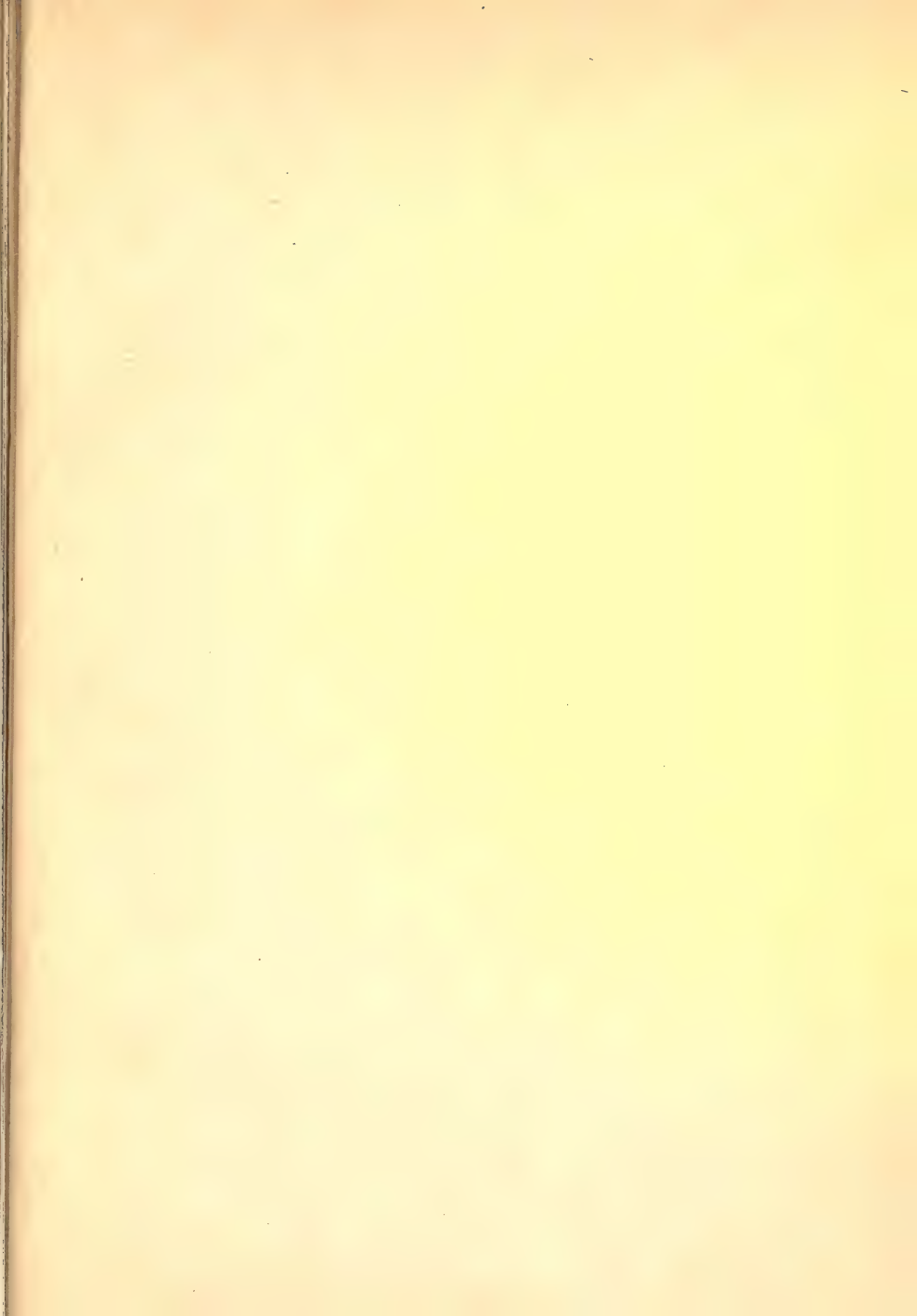
Theologians disputed, but the people, with the sanction of the Church, honored her as Mary Immaculate.

The Council of Trent declared that it was not its intention to include *her* in its decree concerning the transmission of Adam's guilt to his posterity.

The question set at rest forever by the dogma of the *Immaculate Conception*. * Mary exempted from the stain of *Original Sin*, not through any merits of her own, but through "the merits foreseen" of our Lord Himself, in order, precisely, that she might be fit to become His mother (Bull *Ineffabilis*).

Hence flow more solid reasons for believing in her Assumption:

1. As God had seen fit to exempt her from the stain of *Original*, and to preserve her from the guilt of *Actual* sin, her chaste and sinless body might well be exempted from the corruption of the tomb, one of the penalties of sin.
2. Our Lord could surely accord this privilege to His beloved Mother if He wished. Most reasonable to believe that He would do so. To believe that she, who had shared His sufferings more fully, by far, than any other creature, from the day of Simeon's prophecy to the moment when the soldier's lance pierced His sacred side, should be the first to witness, in body and soul, His glory in heaven. What son would do less for his



mother, were he able to do as much? What had been said of the Father in regard to the Son, might well be said of the Son in regard to His Mother: "Thou shalt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption" (Acts xiii. 35).

Conclusion.—No hesitation in believing that our Blessed Mother is in heaven, *body* and *soul*. No fear of the imputation of ignorance or superstition. On the contrary, rejoice with the angels in heaven, and unite with them in blessing the Lord. Rejoice in the knowledge which your Faith gives you of the mysteries of God, and of His merciful and bountiful dealings with mankind. Repeat with grateful affection the beautiful invocations sanctioned by Holy Mother Church: "Queen of the angels and of the patriarchs, of the prophets and apostles, and of all the saints—*Queen of heaven*, pray for us!"

•

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

"After this I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the LAMB, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."—Apoc. vii. 9.

Exordium.—The Church celebrates, during the course of the year, many feasts of individual saints. They shine as stars, and are grouped together as constellations in the firmament of her beautiful liturgy.

The object of these feasts is: *First.* To honor God who is truly "wonderful in His saints" (Ps. lxxvii. 36). *Secondly.* To honor these, His faithful servants, as we honor, here on earth, men and women who have won our admiration and gratitude for their civic virtues—their charity, philanthropy, patriotism, etc. *Thirdly.* That we may study their virtues and obtain through the intercession of these friends of God, the grace to imitate them.

But in to-day's feast there is something more: It is not the feast of any one particular saint; nor even of all those whose names are preserved *on human records*. It is the Feast of *all God's elect*, whose names and number are known *to Him alone*.

It is in reality a joyful *Vision* of surpassing beauty, that we are called upon to contemplate to-day. The gates of heaven are, as it were, thrown open, and we are allowed to see the countless number of those who through God's ineffable mercy, and by faithful correspondence to His grace, in the observance of His precepts, have already attained to everlasting happiness.

The primary object, therefore, of to-day's feast is to give us *encouragement* and *hope*. It shows us: *First.* The boundless extent of God's mercy and grace. *Secondly.* That salvation is attainable

in every conceivable station in life, and in spite of all difficulties and obstacles.

I. The glorious and consoling vision of St. John: Twelve thousand (a symbolical number) saved from every tribe of Israel. Yet all, *as tribes*, were not equally faithful. Simeon and Levi, for their barbarous cruelty (Gen. xxxiv. 25) inherited for their tribes a malediction from their dying father Jacob (Gen. xlix. 5, 7). The tribe of Benjamin, in punishment for fiendish immorality and unbending haughtiness, had been well nigh exterminated (Judges xix. 22; xx. 46, 47). Nevertheless, from these three, as well as from the tribe of Juda, who received the dying patriarch's greatest blessing, and from whom the Messiah was to come (Gen. xlix. 8, 10) there were "*twelve thousand signed.*"

Tribes, and nations, and governments may dishonor God, resist his ordinances, violate His law—and be destroyed. The innocent may seem to perish with the guilty, so far as this world and temporal goods are concerned. But each faithful soul is constantly present to God's all-seeing eye, and receives from Him aid in seasonable time. "Because with the Lord there is mercy: and with Him plentiful redemption" (Ps. cxxix. 7, 129). "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just: and his ears unto their prayers" (Ps. xxxiii. 16). Moreover, His favor is not restricted to the twelve tribes of Israel, even though they were His chosen people and the inheritors of His promises. It extends to *all nations*, Gentile as well as Jew; Greek and barbarian; the wise and the unwise (Cf. Rom. i. 13, 16). "For the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared *to all men*" (Titus ii. 11). "And after this I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

II. Not only from all nations, but from all stations and conditions in life: *Riches* by no means an insurmountable obstacle. For though "a rich man," says our Lord, "shall *hardly* (i. e. with great difficulty) enter the kingdom of heaven," yet He adds, "with God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 23, 26). All may, if they wish, become "wise stewards," and "make unto *themselves* friends of the mammon of iniquity" (Luke xvi. 9). Many have done so.

High station not necessarily an obstacle to salvation. Kings,* queens, princes, and nobles; men and women of high birth, and immersed in the affairs of the world, have found their way to the company of the saints.

Poverty and *lowly birth* surely no obstacle: Both have been blessed and sanctified by our Lord Himself.

Ignorance, isolation, *even barbarism*, no obstacles: Proof in the records of missionaries in every age and clime.

Even the hostility of prejudice, error, worldly learning or inveterate evil life has to give way before the irresistible power of God's mercy and grace: The priest beholds this wonderful triumph every day. Sees the stolid unbeliever, the impious scoffer, the hardened criminal, the long lost sheep, the penitent thief, and the prodigal son each in turn and often all together, bow the head and receive the yoke which our Lord has declared to be "sweet." Sees them all gathered into the one fold along with those that have never strayed. Perfect fulfilment of the beautiful prophecy: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion and the sheep shall abide together—and a little child shall lead them" (Isa. xi. 6).

* Butler, in his "Lives of the Saints," mentions no less than twenty-three Kings and nine Queens. Yet his list is utterly insignificant in comparison with the whole number of the elect.



What the daily ministry of the priest reveals: Wonderful triumphs of faith and grace, in conditions sometimes the most adverse: The aged and feeble, shorn of all human comfort and consolation, but calmly and confidently "looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13). Those in the prime of life, withstanding the fatal blandishments of opportunity and prosperity, or bearing up courageously under trials, adversity, sorrow, and bereavement: "All looking for that blessed hope."

Most touching and consoling scene of all: The number of youths and maidens just crossing, as it were, the threshold of life, and surrounded on all sides by vice and corruption, yet keeping their souls pure and undefiled in the midst of it all. "These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night" (Apoc. vii. 14, 15).

Conclusion.—Salvation therefore obtainable by all. There are places reserved for all those who heed the warning of the Prince of the Apostles: "Brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election" (II. Pet. i. 10). Our Lord encourages this hope: "In my Father's house there are many mansions" (John xiv. 2).

Exhortation.—To contemplate with the eyes of faith the beautiful vision described to us to-day in the inspired word of God.

It should fill our hearts with joy, love, and hope. Even now we should lift up our hearts and our voices in unison with that blessed heavenly host, adoring God, and repeating with them their anthem of never-ceasing praise: "Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen."

THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

"Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people."*—Judith xv. 10.

Exordium.—Meaning of the mystery. Its relation to the doctrine of original sin. As a consequence of Adam's fall, all men are *conceived and born* in sin. "As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, *in whom all have sinned*" (Rom. v. 12). Two *partial* exceptions to this general law: The prophet Jeremiah (Jer. i. 5) and St. John the Baptist (Luke i. 41) were both sanctified before their birth. Consequently were not *born* in sin, though *conceived* in it, according to the general law.

Mary the only *absolute* conception. Exempted from the stain of original sin, not only before her birth, but in the *very first instant of her conception*. (Bull, Ineffabilis Deus.)

Perhaps well to note in passing the error of those who imagine that by the "Immaculate Conception" is meant that our Lord *was conceived without sin* by His Virgin Mother!

1. Brief history of the Dogma. 2. Reasons why God should have made this singular exception. 3. The mystery of the Immaculate Conception is the first in the long series connected with our Redemption.

I. Mary has always been the object of special honor. Honored by our Blessed Lord Himself at Nazareth and at Cana. Honored by the apostles and early Christians. Honored even in the myths

* Text of one of Father T. N. Burke's most eloquent sermons. Immac. Concept.

of idolatrous nations. (Gaume, Vol. IV., p. 253.) From the early ages of Christianity the fathers and doctors of the Church have professed their belief in Mary's exemption from the general law of original sin. (Cf. Tanqueray, Dog. Spec. C. IV.; Hurter, De Immac. Concep.) As early as the seventh century in the Greek, and the ninth in the Western Church, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated. (Tanqueray in loco.) True, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries the question was the subject of ardent controversy between learned and saintly men, who, however, vied with each other in extolling the prerogatives of the Holy Mother of God. They were merely seeking the truth. Were afraid to assert what they would gladly believe, lest they should contradict the dogma of original sin.

The great Council of Trent cleared the way. While clearly and emphatically reaffirming that dogma, it explicitly declares that "it is not the intention of the Synod to include in this decree, where original sin is treated of, the blessed and *immaculate* Virgin Mary, Mother of God" (Sess. v. Can. 5). (Cf. Nampon, Doctrine of Council of Trent, p. 210.) From that time forward, the devotion universal and enthusiastic. Clergy and faithful of the entire world unite in proclaiming and honoring the singular privilege of Mary. Controversy prohibited, and the devotion sanctioned by the decrees of Sovereign Pontiffs: Pius V., Gregory XV., Alexander VII., Clement XI., Benedict XIV., and others. (Cf. Tanqueray, Cap. IV.; Bouvier II. 379; Gaume IV. 254; vel Passaglia, De Con. Immac. Sec. VII. C. 2, Art. 3.)

Petitions to Greg. XVI. and Pius IX. from Bishops, clergy secular and regular, Emperors, Princes, and the whole Catholic laity, begging that the Immaculate Conception be declared an Article of Faith (Bull, Inef.).

Finally the Definition, 1854. Two things to be especially remarked: 1. It is declared that this Doctrine "*is revealed of God;*" i. e., is contained, implicitly, at least, in the Holy Scriptures. (For the texts, cf. Divine Armory, pp. 134, 135.) 2. It is explicitly stated that exemption from the stain of original sin was not accorded to Mary *through any merit of hers*, but "*as a favor and privilege from Almighty God, in view of the merits of JESUS CHRIST, the SAVIOUR of the human race.*" Hence no undue or unreasonable exaltation of a mere creature.

II. Reasons why God should have made this singular exception in favor of Mary. Found in the divine plan of the Redemption.

God indeed mercifully willed in the Redemption the uplifting of man to a dignity higher even, in some respects, than that which he enjoyed before the fall. "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound" (Rom. v. 20). But the price of *redemption* was *atonement*—perfect reparation of the offense committed against God by sin. God is obliged to procure the vindication of His own honor before all things else.

Man had committed the offense. Man should have a part, at least, in the atonement, or reparation.

Three actors in the tragedy of *the fall*: Adam, Eve, and the devil. Three also in that of *the reparation*: Christ, the second Adam; Mary, the second Eve; and the same enemy, the devil.

But Eve was pure and unspotted—unstained by sin—when her free will was put to the test.

It was, therefore, meet and just that Mary should be placed on an equal footing, in order that her free act should have the same responsibility—the same measure of merit or demerit.

Similarity of their trial. Contrast in their dispositions, and in their act: Eve is approached by the serpent with fair and gentle



words and a flattering promise. She is to attain a high dignity; to become even as God Himself.

But the condition laid down is, that she *disobey God*; violate His express command; ignore His *holy will*. She hesitates; hearkens to the tempter urging her on. She yields deliberately:

" Her rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate:
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That *all was lost!*"

Mary is approached by an angel, in graceful form and heavenly splendor. (Saints Ambrose and Jerome seem to suppose that he assumed the form of a man. Cf. à Lapide, in Luc. i. 29.)

She, too, is greeted with words of highest praise and compliment. She is told that she is to bring forth a son who shall be great, "and shall be called the Son of the Most High;" that He shall possess the throne of David, and shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. But her first thought is not of the honor predicted for herself, but of *the Holy Will of God*. "How can this be done"—without displeasing Him?

Not until fully assured on this point, does she give her free consent: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word" (Luke i. 38).

A perfect offset to the disobedience of Eve. Yet Mary could not repair the evil done. That was beyond *human* power. The INCARNATION necessary. *Divinity* must unite itself with *humanity* in order that the second Adam might make adequate atonement.

Hence *second reason* why Mary should be exempt from the stain of original sin. The Son of God could not unite Himself to tainted

flesh. Could not permit Satan to point the finger of scorn and triumph at His own Most Blessed Mother.

III. The mystery of the Immaculate Conception is, therefore, the *first* in the long and glorious series connected with our Redemption. God's first act in that great work of divine love and mercy. How beautiful, how glorious, how reasonable this doctrine! What subject of joy, consolation, and gratitude!

Conclusion.—A word about Judith and the Assyrian invaders (seventh century B. C.). How she was greeted by her people on her return.

With good reason does our Holy Mother Church apply these same words to Mary: As Queen of all the elect, she is "The glory of the heavenly Jerusalem."

As cooperating in the work of the Redemption, and as our faithful mediatrix, she is "The joy of Israel," i. e., of all God's chosen people. Lastly, on account of the singular privilege conferred upon her, she is truly "The honor of our people" of the whole human race,

"Our tainted nature's solitary boast."

Let us rejoice, therefore, in this great dogma of our Holy Faith. Recall to mind all the consoling truths connected with it, and unite with Holy Mother Church in proclaiming the praises of the Virgin Immaculate, Mother of our Saviour.

"Thou art all fair, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7).
"Thou art the glory of Jerusalem; thou art the joy of Israel; thou art the honor of our people."

CHRISTMAS DAY.

REASONS WHY WE SHOULD REJOICE AND BE GLAD.

“The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men.”—Titus ii. 2.

Exordium.—When we consider the amount of wickedness and godlessness that there is in the world, the unanimous and universal manifestation of joy, good will, and generosity at Christmas time is little less than phenomenal. Especially when we note that it is not a mere passing outburst of enthusiasm; not a single ovation to the hero of a day; but that it is an annual occurrence, unabated, since the dawn of Christianity.

True it is, and sadly true, that Satan, too, seems to hold high carnival at this holy time; and many poor deluded souls yield themselves with more than wonted willingness to do his bidding, and hurl defiance in the face of their loving, merciful Redeemer.

Nevertheless, there is joy exceeding great, that comes from God, and is pleasing to Him. Our world, in spite of all the wickedness that defiles it, is radiant with the light of the SUN OF JUSTICE (Mal. iv. 2). “A light to the revelation of the gentiles” (Luke ii. 32).

That *our* joy may be pure, unalloyed, lasting, and pleasing to God, we should recall to mind the reasons for it, and the conditions on which it may be attained and preserved.

They are to be found in the various portions of Holy Scripture read at the Masses to-day. All are included in the words of the text: “*The grace of God* our Saviour hath appeared to *all men*.”

I. *The grace of God*, i. e., His *favor*; His *good will*; His *bounty*;

His *love*. God has always been infinitely good to His creatures—to *man*.

He was good to Adam and Eve; and they transgressed His commands.

He was good to their children; but "all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times" (Gen. vi. 5).

He was good to Noah and his descendants; and again "all flesh corrupted its way" (Gen. vi. 12). Calling Abraham from the midst of idolatry, He bade him leave his father's house, his kindred, and his country, and go into a distant land, which should belong to him and his seed forever (Gen. xii.).

The history of the Jewish people for two thousand years is the record of God's goodness to man, and man's perversity and ingratitude to God. But the joyful event commemorated to-day marks a new and glorious era in the annals of the human race: "When the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son, . . . that he might redeem them who were under the law; that *we might receive the adoption of sons*" (Gal. iv. 4, 5).

II. This new *favor* or *grace* of God may be illustrated by the example of a King possessed of boundless wealth, and known also for his boundless liberality. A son is born to him; and to signalize the joyful event, he makes every subject in his kingdom heir to a princely fortune, restricted by only one condition: that he *accepts it*, and does *not squander it*, or *barter it away*. What joy there would be in that kingdom!

Application easily made: "The goodness and kindness of God appeared, *not* by the works of justice which *we have done*, but according to His mercy, . . . that being justified by *His grace*, we may be *heirs*, according to hope, of life everlasting, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Titus iii. 4-7; 2d Mass). "He that spared not even



his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, *given us all things?*" (Rom. viii. 32). "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the *spirit of adoption of sons*. . . . And if sons, *heirs* also; *heirs* indeed of God, and *joint heirs with Christ*" (Rom. viii. 15-17).

Such the true reason of our Christmas joy. Rejoicing in our "Christian Heritage."

III. This heritage is for *all men*. For to *all men* hath the grace of God appeared. No longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile; Greek and Roman. *All*, therefore, have equal right and equal facility to enter into this inheritance.

But how? *First of all*, by "denying ungodliness and worldly desires, and living soberly, justly, and godly in this world."

This requires courage, self-restraint, and energetic perseverance. What will not an intelligent and reasonable person do to obtain possession of a goodly inheritance?

Many spurn or stupidly ignore the offer made them by the King of Kings at the occasion of the birth of His only Son.

Picture the conduct of many thoughtless, negligent, ignorant Christians at this holy time—worse, perhaps, than at any other time of the year.

The conduct of worldlings and profligates: Votaries of fashion, folly, and vice. Forgetful of their new-born King, their Infant Saviour. Forgetful also of His suffering poor. Their homes, and their halls of pleasure, like Jerusalem and the court of Herod when the Magi arrived there.

Secondly, this inheritance is to be secured by "looking for the blessed hope and (final) coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Faith in our Divine Saviour begets this "blessed hope." Makes

us realize fully who He is; why He has come amongst us; and what we may expect from Him, *if*, “denying ungodliness and unworldly desires, *we live* soberly, and justly, and godly in this world.”

It is for this, St. Paul tells us, that our Saviour came: “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, *a pursuer of good works.*”

Conclusion.—Remember that the true cause, or reason for our Christmas joy, is the *gift*, the *inheritance* we have received from God, in Christ our Saviour. This should be uppermost in our thoughts, and the chief subject of our conversation to-day: “These things speak, and exhort in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Such are the earnest words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Heeding them, we shall find that, in very deed, “the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men.”

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.*

THE WHEAT AND THE COCKLE.†

"Suffer both to grow until the harvest."—Matt. xiii. 30.

Exordium.—Remarkable beauty and simplicity of the parable.

Our Lord carefully explains its figurative sense: "The sower is the Son of man," i. e., our Lord Himself. "The field is the world: The good seed are the children of the kingdom," i. e., those who "hear the word of God, and keep it." "And the cockle are the children of the wicked one," i. e., those who voluntarily yield to the influence of the devil and to their own evil passions—persistently violating the law of God, and trying to oppress the good or lead them into sin. "The reapers are the angels." As the reapers in the time of the harvest will gather up the cockle and burn it, "so shall it be at the end of the world: The Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xiii. 37-42).

Important lesson to be learned from the parable: I. Why God tolerates moral evil in the world, and permits the wicked to prosper. II. Why we should bear with it patiently, and refrain from *excessive* zeal in trying to repress or eradicate it.

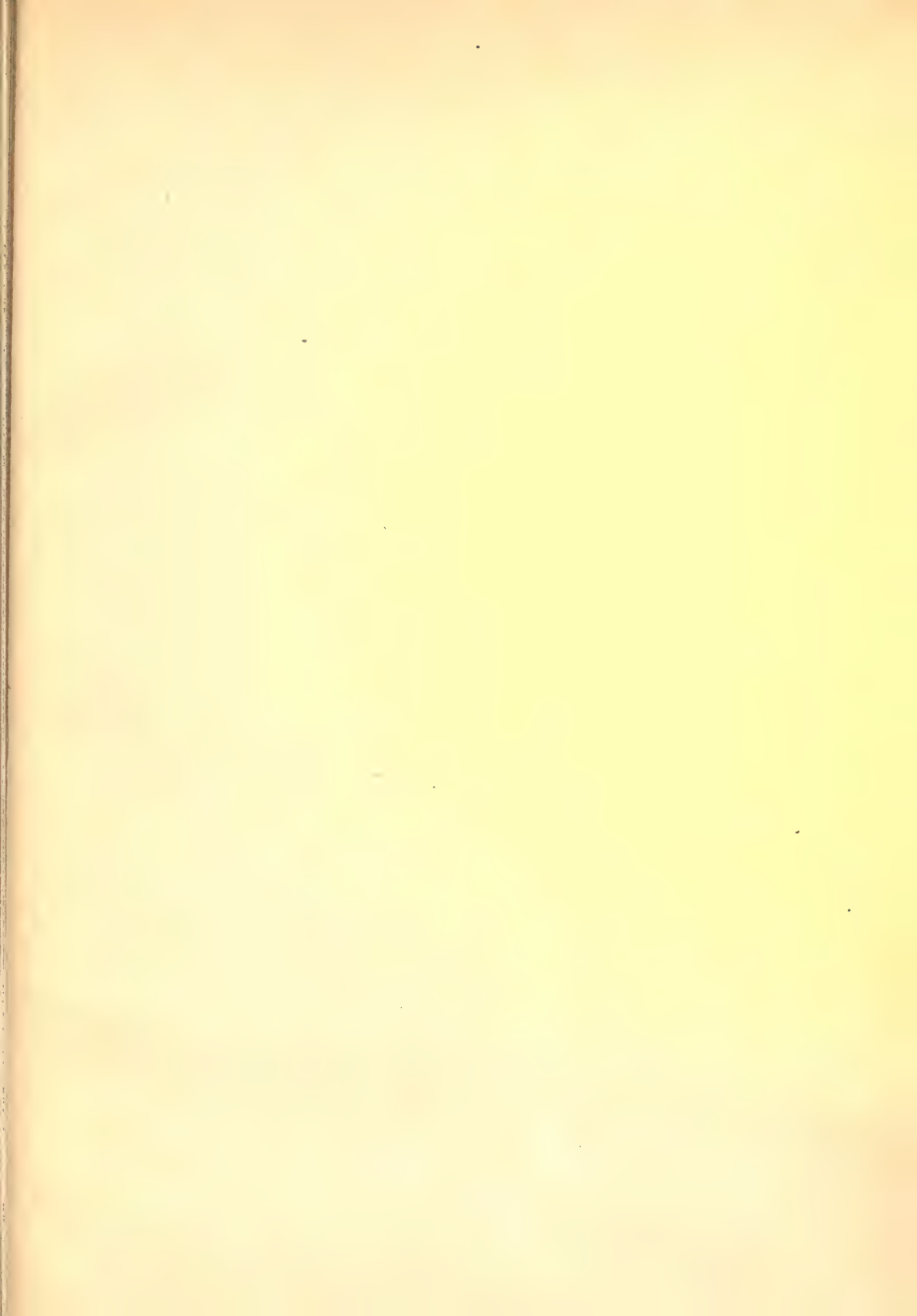
I. Why God allows the wicked to live and prosper: 1. Because He is *eternal*. Time is the measure of *our* existence; *not* of *His*. To us the passage of time seems long and slow. To Him all things

* This sketch is added to make the cycle complete for any year.

† For an excellent commentary of this parable, from a somewhat different but thoroughly Catholic point of view, and with several valuable quotations from the Fathers, see Trench, *On the Parables of Our Lord*.

are ever *present*; the *end* as well as the *beginning*. He knows no *to-morrow*. Hence He can afford to let the sinner run his course. 2. The wicked can do no real harm in the world, except to those who foolishly and culpably yield to their influence. 3. Many of those who for a time follow evil courses afterward become faithful servants of God, and benefactors to their fellow-men: v. g., St. Paul, St. Augustine, and numberless others. 4. On the other hand, those who persist in abusing the gifts and the mercy of God, only render more evident the justice of their inevitable punishment. *Lastly*, God could not allow *human agents* to undertake the separation of the wicked from the just. He knows they are incompetent. That they can not always distinguish the cockle from the wheat. Nothing more fallible than human judgment in regard to the relative virtue or depravity of individuals. Some cases, of course, are clear enough, even to human eyes; but many others are not, as daily experience proves. God alone can search the hearts. (Ita Fuller, apud Trench, Note.) The cruelty and injustice of man toward his fellow-man, through immoderate or misguided zeal, is one of the deplorable but undeniable facts of history.

II. Why we should bear patiently with evil: First of all, because God permits it to exist. This must be for some wise purpose. Were it better otherwise, He would surely not allow it to remain as it is. 2. Because, as we have seen, we are incompetent to *eradicate* moral evil—to banish it from the world. This does not mean that vice, and depravity, and demoralizing error should be allowed to run riot, and go unrebuked. It is the duty of both civil and religious authority—especially the latter—to oppose and repress it by prudent and legitimate means. But we, *as individuals*, should think first each one what he is himself; and follow the injunctions of our Lord and His great apostle: “He that is without sin among you, let him



cast the first stone" (John viii. 7). "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good" (Rom. xii. 21). St. Augustine calls attention to the fact that it is not *men*, but *angels*, that will separate the cockle from the wheat when the proper time comes. Hence he asks, "Dost thou dare to usurp the office of another, which will not be thine, even in the time of the harvest?" (Sic apud Trench).

3. Bearing with evil exercises the patience of the just, and increases their merit. Virtue shines brighter in contrast with vice. No just soul can fail to perceive the difference between the maxims of the world and those of our divine Saviour; the difference between the "broad way" and the "narrow" one (Matt. vii. 13).

Finally, there is no reason to envy the wicked in either their pleasures or their prosperity: They are only *cockle*, whose end is to be burned; while the just shall have their consolation and their reward: "The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 41-43).

Conclusion.—Learn from this beautiful parable to admire and adore the infinite wisdom and goodness of God.

Murmur not against the dispensations of His Providence.

Usurp not His prerogatives by immoderate zeal and unprofitable strife: "For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God" (James i. 20).

Destroy not the wheat in trying to tear up the cockle. "Suffer both to grow until the harvest." Strive to be "the good seed," who are "the children of the Kingdom," keeping yourselves "unspotted from this world" (James i. 27), and "in your patience you shall possess your souls" (Luke xxi. 19).

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